

## Tilburg University

### Contesting religious authority

Sunarwoto

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# CONTESTING RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

A Study on *Dakwah* Radio  
in Surakarta, Indonesia



**Contesting Religious Authority**  
**A Study on *Dakwah* radio in Surakarta, Indonesia**

PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor  
aan Tilburg University  
op gezag van de rector magnificus,  
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in het openbaar te verdedigen ten overstaan van een  
door het college voor promoties aangewezen commissie  
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In memory of my mother who passed away in 2008.  
You'll always live in my life



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# NOTES ON ARABIC TRANSLITERATION AND QUR'ANIC TRANSLATION

The Arabic transliteration of this book follows the system adopted by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* with some modifications. Diacritics have been reduced for simplification. Plural forms of Arabic words end with 's'. The names of people, organizations, and radio programs follow their locally spelled forms. Titles of books, journals, and articles of non-Arabic language are also written according to their original forms. Throughout the book, Qur'anic translations follow Abdullah Yusuf Ali's *The meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (New Edition. Beltsville, Maryland, USA: Amana Publications 2001).

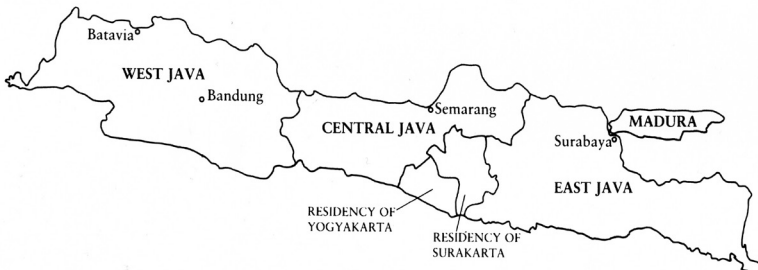


# MAPS



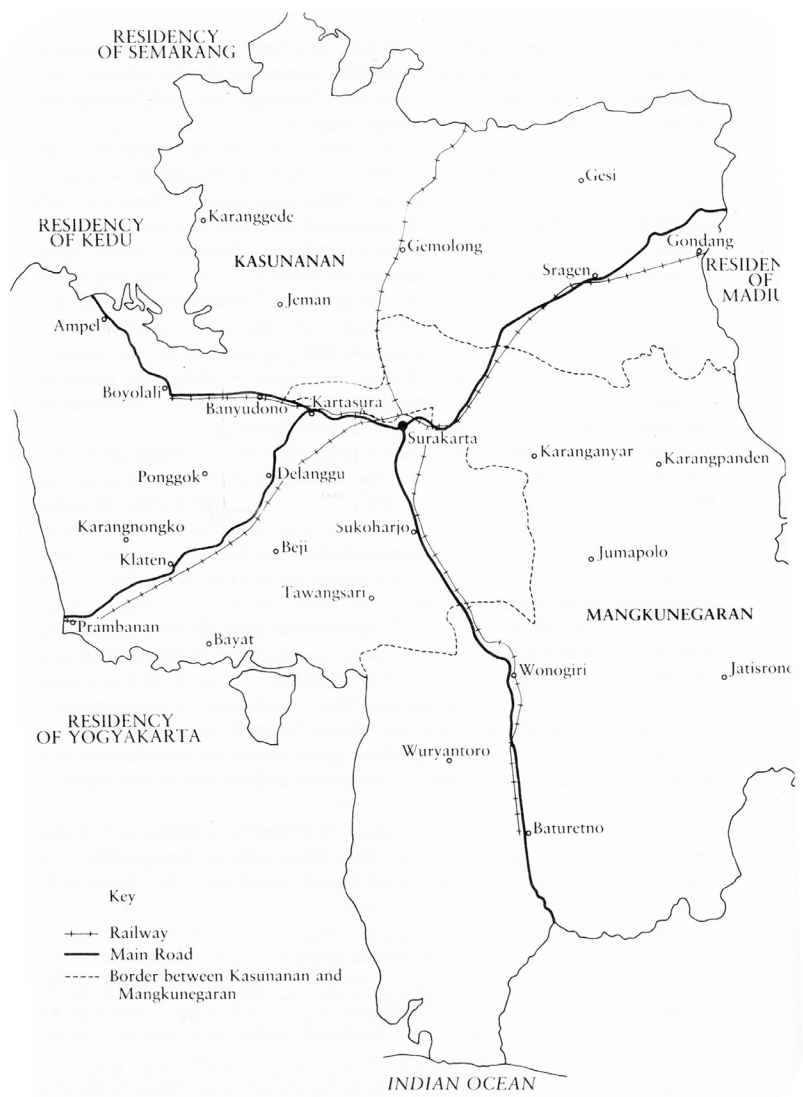
Map 1: Indonesia

Source: <http://0.tqn.com/d/geography/1/0/m/J/indonesia.jpg>

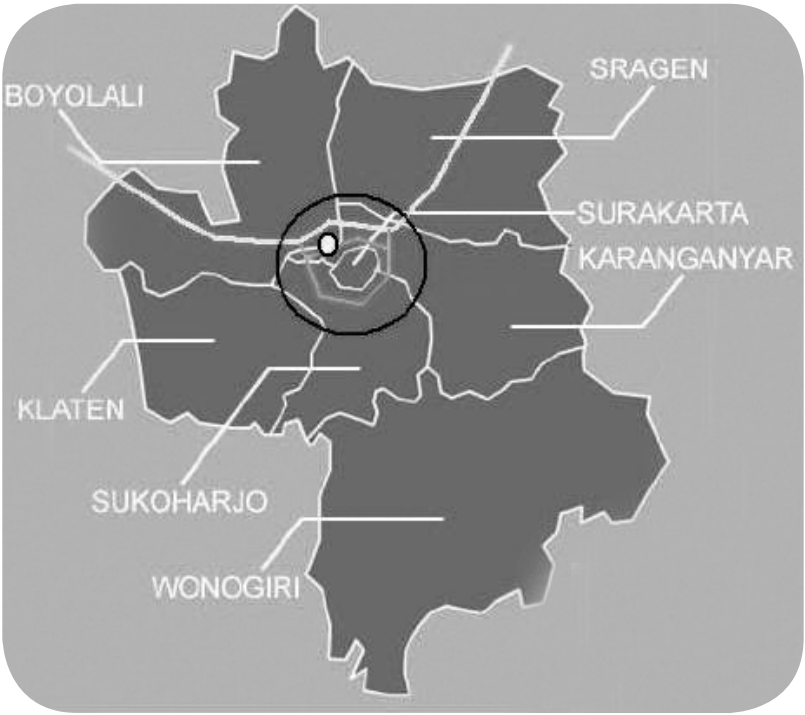


Map 2: Java

Source: Takashi Shiraishi 1990



Map 3: Surakarta Residency 1920s  
Source: Modified from Takashi Shiraishi 1990



Map 4: Solo Raya

Source: <http://www.skyscrapercity.com/showthread.php?t=1500441>





## CHAPTER ONE

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1 Background

### *1.1 Preliminary personal observations*

Living in Surakarta as a new comer, apart from similarities, I became aware of various differences compared to my birthplace. As a Javanese by origin, I share many things with other members of Javanese society, especially Javanese language and culture. This, of course, is invaluable capital for someone who wants to do research on Javanese society. But, I am not a native of Solonese Javanese society. This is what troubled me when I started to observe Surakarta from my point of view. I come from a society where Islam is practiced virtually homogenously. Muslims share many things in many ways, especially in terms of many aspects of their religious orientation. A religious leader, called *kyai*, is the highest authority to whom people might ask religious questions and ask for solutions for their religious problems. A *kyai* should have had special training in Islamic disciplines in *pesantrens* (traditional Islamic boarding schools). Muslims prefer a Friday sermon delivered by a *khatib* (preacher) with a *pesantren* background to

one delivered by (Islamic) university graduates. The majority of the Muslims in my birthplace are followers of the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).<sup>1</sup> I myself am culturally attached to this organization too. A small number of modernist Muhammadiyah members emerged only in the late 1980s. Besides attending a formal State school, I was trained in a *madrasah diniyah* (religious school) called *sekolah sore* (afternoon school), which is similar to a *pesantren*. This educational background, to a large extent, has influenced me in formulating answers to such questions as ‘who has the power to speak in the name of Islam?’ For me, the answer should be that a *kyai* is the highest authority of Islam in Java. However, this is not the case in Surakarta.

Compared to my birthplace in the northern part of Central Java, Surakarta is different in many ways. In terms of religious authority, it has a polycentric power system. There is no central authority Muslims can uniformly follow. A *kyai* is not the only authority to follow. He even is not so common in some areas. Although the majority of Muslims here are Sunni, they practice Islam in various forms. This can even be easily seen in a single family. To illustrate this, let me tell a story of my personal experience living in a family where Islam is practiced in different ways. Since mid-2008, I lived with my parents-in-law. It was interesting for me to see that the members of my ‘new’ family have different religious orientations. My father-in-law, a village *imam* (prayer leader), and my brother-in-law subscribe to more puritan forms of Islam, while my mother-in-law seems to follow Islam as it is commonly practiced.

This difference in religious orientation manifests itself strikingly when certain religious events take place. For instance, my father-in-law and my brother-in-law never join *tahlilan* (communal prayers for the dead) or make religious offerings (*slametan*) to the deceased, because they consider them un-Islamic, while my mother-in-law does, because she thinks that this kind of praying for the deceased is recommended in Islam. Another example is

the date of the start and the end of the Ramadan fasting month. In Indonesia, setting the date of Ramadan has become the subject of dispute among Muslim organizations and the State, caused by the different methods they use in determining the dates. One group follows the *rukyat* system, which means that the new moon should be visually spotted in order to determine the beginning and end of Ramadan. Others adhere to *hisab*, which means that the dates of the beginning and end of the Ramadan should be based on calculation.<sup>2</sup> When a difference in the dates of the start and end of Ramadan occurs, members of my family in Klaten start and end the ritual fasting on different dates. Some follow the outcome of the determination of the Saudis, while others follow the government.

This little story of my family tells us about how diverse Islam is practiced in Surakarta, even in a very small entity like a family. The story also reveals that in Surakarta no central reference exists for Muslims to find answers to religious questions in their daily life. At the time of my fieldwork, I tried to confirm the above personal impression by asking some interviewees about whom they considered '*tokoh agama*' (religious figures or leaders). I departed from the assumption that the structure of religious authority in Surakarta was different from that in the Javanese coastal areas of Central Java, where I come from. In these areas, each village has one mosque (or more but there is one central mosque) and many *langgar* or *musalla* (small praying houses). The central mosque is led by the central *kyai* assisted by other *kyai*. The leader of a *langgar* can be a *kyai* or a *guru ngaji* or *ustadh* (religious teachers), whose authority is below that of the *kyai* of the central mosque. If a legal case occurs, for instance, the lower authorities will follow the legal opinion of the central *kyai* or the opinion of the board of *kyai* within the central structure of the mosque. Such a centralized authority structure is reasonable when all or the majority of the Muslims in the village subscribe to the same religious orientation. Differences and, more often, conflicts in religious ideology and

orientation may be used as the reason for the establishment of a new mosque in a village. This structure differs from that in Surakarta and its surroundings. In those areas, one village often has many mosques and there are very few *langgar* or *musalla*. A mosque is rarely, if ever, led by a central *kyai* or *ustadh*. Most villages do not even have a central religious leader such as a *kyai*. The director of the mosque also serves as *imam*, to whom members of the congregation may also ask religious questions. The authority of this *imam* can be unchallenged, especially if he owns the mosque or when he is a rich man in the village or has a high social status. He is free to select and invite people to deliver Friday sermons in his mosque. In certain villages, adequate knowledge of Islam is not even required in order for one to act as *imam* or even as a religious leader, given that no one is trained in Islamic disciplines either in traditional *madrasah* or *pesantren* or in State-run Islamic schools.

In a plural society like Surakarta, religious authority is highly fragmented and decentralized. Habib Novel, a famous preacher in Surakarta, illustrated the fact that Surakartan people are fragmented (*terkotak-kotakkan*) as follows. According to him, everybody can become a figure or leader (*tokoh*). He underlined that *abangan* (non-observant) Muslims form majority of Surakartans. Most Muslims do not perform the obligatory prayers, while at the same time they very enthusiastically organize rituals and religious festivals. The number of people who come to see the *Kebo Slamet* carnival, for instance, is always larger than the number of those who participate in *pengajian* (Islamic gathering, sermon or lecture). *Kebo Slamet* is a sacred albino buffalo believed to be endowed with magical power. In the month of Sura, New Year according to the Javanese calendar, a group of *Kebo Slamet* is used to head the heirloom ritual procession from the Surakarta palace. According to Habib Novel, with this religious background, people have little respect for '*ulama*' (Muslim scholars). He said, 'People

[in Surakarta] believe more in good manners (*sopan santun*), ethics. The main thing is that a person should be generous, nice, and (therefore) he is my leader. That's it'.<sup>3</sup> In a nutshell, being a personality (*tokoh*) is most important. People respect a person, not because of his religious knowledge, but because of his attitudes. Citing one of their religious teachers, Surakartan people are characterized by '*imanuhum fi 'uyunihim*', which literally means, 'they trust only what they see'. Habib Novel explained further, 'Their faith depends on the public appearance [of a figure] they see... The people will follow a person who can make an incredible public appearance'.<sup>4</sup> Rather than merely respect '*ulama*', they honor influential public figures that have a big *majlis taklim* (public forum for Islamic study) or the like. He characterizes people in Solo (not *Soloraya*, which consists of four sub-districts) as individualistic (*nafsi-nafsi*) and who have no ties with the '*ulama*'. Accordingly, the relation between the common people and the '*ulama*' is not religiously hierarchical. In other words, their hierarchal relation is determined by social status and not by the relation between the '*ulama*' and the *ummah*.<sup>5</sup> Choirul Rustam Supardjo, the head of the Surakarta branch of the FPI (Islamic Defenders Front), shares some ideas with Habib Novel. He acknowledged that there is no such thing as a central Muslim leader in Surakarta. He observed that the people tend to follow their own *ustadh* and consequently, everything depends on their respective *ustadh*. He gave the example of his own organization, the FPI. For the Surakarta branch of FPI, the MUI branch of Surakarta is one of the religious authorities to which it refers. This is, he explains, because the FPI is an official organization (*organisasi resmi*). In *shari'ah*-related matters, it mostly refers to Mudzakkir, the director of Ma'had al-Islam, Gumuk, Surakarta, and Supardjo's mentor. Mudzakir himself is not an FPI member. However, in organizational and ideological matters, the Surakarta branch of the FPI follows the central FPI leader, Habib Rizieq.<sup>6</sup>

A village *imam* told me a story of the mosque he leads. The mosque was built in 1967-68 in the wake of the political coup of 1965 as result of the increasing awareness of the importance of religion to their life of the old and young generations. The mosque was the center for Friday prayers for the villagers. Based on an agreement between the founders of the mosque and the villagers, all major religious activities, especially Friday prayers and the two *'id* prayers, should be held at this mosque. A few years later, a *musalla* was built. The building of this *musalla* was better than that of the mosque which fueled a conflict over the organization of the Friday prayers. Some village leaders thought that the *musalla* was a better place to conduct the Friday prayers than the mosque. Eventually, the *musalla* changed into a new mosque where they conducted their own Friday prayers. However, the fact that the building was better was not the sole reason of the conflict of the mosque management. Another *musalla* was also built, but this one was not changed into a mosque. Some figures of this new *musalla* did not want to join organizing the *'id* prayers together in the mosque. They felt that they were more knowledgeable about Islam than the people who managed the mosque. Such a conflict was also triggered by different religious views and ideologies. One mosque was (and is) inclined to follow the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), while the other tended to the Muhammadiyah or another organization.

Social status also played a major role in the conflict. In this village, there is no *kyai* as in the villages in northern Central Java. According to my uncle-in-law, an *imam* of the mosque was selected by the congregation (*jama'ah*) of the mosque and not by all Muslim villagers. Therefore, his authority was limited to that congregation. Most villagers would prefer a State-appointed religious official (*modin*) charged with arranging communal religious rituals such as *slametan*. The *modin* of this village, according to my uncle-in-law, is a rich man. Villagers have much more respect for him than for the

*imam* of the mosque regardless of his lesser knowledge of Islam (he is not trained in Islamic education). The *modin* yields greater authority in religious matters than the *imam*. Responding to my question of who has the right to speak for Islam in the village, my uncle pointed to the dominant role of the *modin* rather than that of the *kyai* or the *ustadh* and the limited role of *imam* in religious matters. People believe more in the *modin* than in the *imam*.

I also had a discussion with the son of my uncle who serves as *takmir* (mosque manager). He said that it is a common mistake to identify an *imam* with a *takmir*. His father once even considered himself to be both *imam* and *takmir* but his son corrected this mistake. According to him, both are not identical. It is true that an *imam* can be a *takmir*, and the other way around. However, the task of a *takmir* is to manage the mosque, while an *imam* leads prayers and other religious rituals. By explaining the difference to his father, he tried to solve the conflict of interest among old *imams*, including his father, in the management of the mosque. He also said that charitable money (*uang infak*) often was a source of conflict.

It is interesting to see that even within a relatively homogenous context a centralized form of authority not always exists. Susanto, a mosque director in Klaten,<sup>7</sup> said, 'In my place no one wants to be called '*kyai*' or '*ustadh*', because [he] will feel burdened with that [title]... we prefer to be equal ... (People) consider the [title] *kyai*, because of his (Islamic) knowledge and education, his religious study and others, as too high'. It is interesting that the majority of the people in the village where Susanto comes from are NU followers. Although predominantly used by the NU, the title *kyai* is not always used in the villages in Surakarta and surroundings. Susanto himself is neither a *kyai* nor an *ustadh*, although he was trained in a *pesantren* and he went to an Islamic university in Surakarta. Susanto added that, when facing insolvable religious problems, Muslims of his village will seek religious answers in a nearby *pesantren*.



The description above does not yet present the whole picture of Islam in Surakarta, especially not from the historical perspective. Throughout history, changes occurred in line with the dynamic position of Islam in society. During the era of the Islamic Mataram Kingdom (established in the 16th century), the king held not only political but also religious authority (see, for instance, Moertono 1968). Ulama had high positions as appointed authorities in charge of religious matters. Some of them founded Islamic education centers called *pesantren*. In the early 20th century, Pakubuwana X (d. 1939) established an Islamic school, Mambaul Ulum in 1914 with the aim to offer Islamic training to future '*ulama*' and *pangulu* (religious judge). Until the 1950s, the Islamic institutions historically connected with the kingdom took up a prominent position in society. However, since the mid-1960s, when the New Order just started to become in power, especially after the disbanding of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI), itinerant preachers took hold of the public and by so doing challenged the domination of the old authorities. They founded *majlis taklim*, *halaqah* (Islamic study circles), and *pesantren*.<sup>8</sup> They became the new religious figures independent of the Surakarta kingdom and the Soeharto's state. When Soeharto tried to curb Muslim activists in political life, some of them became very critical of the State and led clandestine movements. After the fall of Soeharto's regime in 1998, new Muslim groups emerged, bringing with them highly diverse forms of Islamic aspirations and orientations. Some of them were continuations of previous ones, while others established new ones. While in the era of Soeharto, Islam was included in the State's developmental agendas, now freedom of expression as the fruit of the *Reformasi* era granted these new groups more room for public engagement and for debating Islamic discourses. With the absence of a central religious authority as I discussed above, they gained momentum to formulate and to offer their own interpretations of Islam. Facilitated by modern media, they were able to reach more people.

This book deals with *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta. It investigates how religious authority has been constructed and contended by means of the medium radio. In the following subsection, I will introduce the contestation between *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta and its relation to the religious authority.

### *1. 2 Dakwah radio stations in competition*

‘Is there a “war” of *dakwah* radio?’<sup>9</sup> This question stems from the title of a report in *Solopos* daily, a local newspaper in Surakarta, of 6 January 2012. The reporter used the metaphor ‘war’ or ‘battle’ (*perang*) to describe the contestation among the existing *dakwah* radio stations. Putting it between quotation marks and phrasing it as a question, the reporter seemed reluctant to speak explicitly about the critique a certain *dakwah* radio station launched at another station. From the content of the report, however, we can see how representatives of both *dakwah* radio stations defended their respective position with regard to the Islamic orientations and ideologies they held, irrespective of the fact that they asserted their shared aim of proselytizing Islam (*dakwah*). Some of them claimed that their Islamic programs were designed to reach out to common Muslims. The same newspaper reported earlier that there was no competition among *dakwah* radio stations.<sup>10</sup> However, it is clear from their different emphases regarding their radio stations’ missions that each had a different orientation.

What kind of Islam or Islamic interpretation did these *dakwah* radio stations offer? The answer varies from one to another station as stated in the report. M. Alfaruq of RDS FM, as quoted in the report, said, ‘We [RDS FM crew] hope our broadcast programs can make people aware that they should live in accordance with *shari’ah*. *Shari’ah* is the keyword of RDS FM’s jingle, which fully says, “With *shari’ah*, life becomes more beautiful” (*Dengan syariah hidup lebih indah*).’ Rudi Herfianto of MTA FM said that the radio station he led provided listeners with *pengajian* that stem from the

Qur'an and the prophetic tradition (*Sunnah*), and 'not from blind imitation (*taqlid*) of the opinion of the *ustadh* (religious teacher)'. He went on to stress, 'If (religious) knowledge is derived from the personal view of an *ustadh*, it will not be defensible (*hancur*). So, if any of our *ustadhs* makes mistakes, he can be debated'. This emphasis on the Qur'an and the Sunnah and the objection to blindly follow the opinion of the *ustadh* is the articulation of the aspiration of MTA (Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an) to return to original Islam. Nevertheless, what does original Islam look like? The answer of two different groups, Salafi and the members of the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama), represented by Suara Quran FM, Al-Madinah FM (both Salafi), and Al-Hidayah FM (NU-oriented station) is to follow the teachings of the people of the Sunnah and the Islamic community (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*). Unfortunately, the report does not give any example of how different they are. Nevertheless, it is clear that the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* version adopted by both Suara Quran FM and Al-Madinah FM is a Salafi version in which the superior authority of Middle Eastern scholars ('*ulama*') played a dominant role. Differently, Al-Hidayah FM adopts the version of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* that is based on the interpretation of the founders of the Sunni schools in Islamic law (*madhhab*, pl. *madhahib*), and al-Ash'ari (d. 936) and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 944) in theology, and al-Junaid al-Baghdadi (d. 910) and al-Ghazali (d. 1111) in Sufism. Correcting the Islamic understanding of other Muslim groups is part and parcel of the establishment of a *dakwah* radio station. Abdurrahman, director of Suara Quran FM, as recorded in the report, stated that although his radio station had to follow the regulations of the broadcasting authority not to attack others, it is necessary to correct Islamic teachings when others have deviated.

From all *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta, MTA FM is the leading radio station. It invites listeners in and outside Surakarta to attend one of its most favorite programs called *Jihad Pagi*, a Sunday

morning Islamic gathering held in the building of MTA foundation. Ahmad Sukino, the leader of MTA, has become a highly popular radio preacher. He succeeded in bringing MTA, which was a local foundation, to the national level of popularity through his radio sermons. Within the *dakwah* radio stations, MTA FM and Ahmad Sukino had become controversial, since he often provided different interpretations of Islam and criticized the interpretations of others. For instance, he criticized the blind imitation of '*ulama*' (*taqlid*) and local Islamic practices, which triggered some preachers who were ideologically linked to the NU to open their own radio stations. His *fatwas* on *halal* (religiously eatable) meat stirred up public debate, not only among NU members but also among other groups like the Salafis. At the grassroots level, Muhammadiyah members were worried about MTA's fast growth and about the fact that many of them became members of MTA (Jinan 2013: 299-303).

Throughout this section, I first offered my personal observations about Surakarta in terms of its religious authority and then narrowed it down to a specific account of the competition between *dakwah* radio stations that I have identified as having been stimulated, among other things, by the different interpretations of Islam. The following section will describe Surakarta seen from its socio-religious life and new *dakwah* media.

## 2. Surakarta

### 2. 1 Socio-Religious life

Surakarta is a remarkable site for research on Islam in Java. This is inseparable from its position as the center of Javanese culture (Koentjaraningrat 1985) and, more broadly, Javanese civilization. Historically, it is a place where national movements emerged (see Shiraishi 1990). It was in Surakarta that Sarekat Islam (SI), the first Islamic organization, was established in 1912. In the revolution era, it witnessed social conflicts and social unrests, ranging from internal

political conflicts of the local government, communist rebellions (the Madiun affairs in 1948), to anti-Chinese riots (Soejatno 1974). During the New Order, Surakarta was under the control of the government like all other cities. However, clandestine Islamic movements like Darul Islam (DI)<sup>11</sup> led by Abdullah Sungkar and others developed in this place (ICG 2005). Shortly before Soeharto's stepdown in May 1998, social riots called *Kerusuhan Mei* (May Riots) flared up in the city (Mulyadi, Soedarmono et al. 1999: 467-531; Purdey 2006: 72-89). After the *Reformation* era, it witnessed the emergence of radical Muslim groups demanding radical social change based on *shari'ah* (see, e.g., Fananie, Sabardila, and Purnanto 2002; Kolig 2005; Wildan 2009). A number of paramilitary groups emerged such as FPIS (*Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta*, Muslim Youth Front of Surakarta) and *Hawariyyun* (the disciple), *Laskar Jundullah* (Paramilitary of Allah's Soldiers), *Laskar Hizbullah* (Paramilitary of Allah's Party), and *Brigade Hizbullah* (Brigade of Allah's Party). They were known as radical religious groups (*kelompok radikal keagamaan*), who, according to one study, were born out of deep concerns with social and moral decadence (Fananie, Sabardila, and Purnanto 2002).

It should be clear at the outset that the scope of this research is not limited to present-day Surakarta, an administrative government unit that comprises of only five sub-districts (*kecamatan*): Banjarsari, Laweyan, Jebres, Serengan, and Pasar Kliwon. This research covers all Surakarta's regencies popularly called *Soloraya* (the Great Solo). They include Surakarta, Klaten, Sukoharjo, Boyolali, Sragen, Karanganyar, and Wonogiri. In the past, all these areas were known as *Karesidenan Surakarta* or *Residentie Surakarta* in the Dutch colonial period. The area of Surakarta in this sense is located between two volcanoes, Mount Lawu in the east and Mount Merapi in the west. It borders Yogyakarta in the south and Ngawi and Madiun in the north. According to the 2010 census, the estimated number of the population in these areas

is 6.112.679 people (Boyolali = 951.817; Klaten = 1.148.994; Sukoharjo = 849.506; Wonogiri = 942.377; Karanganyar = 840.171; Sragen = 871.989; Surakarta = 507.827).

All the six officially recognized religions (Islam, Roman-Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism) exist in these regencies. However, Muslims constitute the overwhelming majority, ranging from some 98 % to 79 %. In Boyolali, Sragen, and Wonogiri, Christians constitute 2 %; Klaten 6 %; Sukoharjo 5 %; and Karanganyar 4 %. Only Surakarta city has a significant number of Christian minorities up to some 21 %. <sup>12</sup>

Regencies	Muslims	Christians (Catholics & Protestants)	Hindus	Buddhists	Confucians	Others*
Boyolali	908.402	16.187	1.986	2.374	5	1.577
Klaten	1.062.043	61.790	5.194	273	7	740
Sukoharjo	776.983	41.787	407	597	32	4.432
Wonogiri	905.318	21.514	50	1.773	4	443
Karanganyar	774.020	34.151	2.906	382	9	1.728
Sragen	838.958	15.762	1.001	229	10	2.306
Kota Surakarta	393.375	102.858	364	1.208	151	2.381

Table: Religious affiliations (adapted from *Jawa Tengah Dalam Angka 2014*, 2014: 146)

\*Others: *not answered or not asked*.

Although the statistical data above informs us that Muslims make up the majority of the population, it is unable to clarify their plurality in terms of their religious orientation and practice as stated earlier. It is therefore necessary to look at the historical formation of Islam in Java. As a center of Javanese culture, Surakarta has been known for its 'highly syncretic religious life, combining elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam' (Koentjaraningrat 1985: 21). The earliest version of Islam that developed for centuries is *agami Jawi* (Javanese religion) as opposed to *agami Islam santri* (Islamic religion of *santri* [observant Muslims]). This is Javanese Islam (Koentjaraningrat 1985, chap. 5), embraced by proponents

of court culture (Mulyadi, Soedarmono et al. 1999: 147). Studying Islamization and the role of the royal court of Surakarta, Ricklefs (2006) puts forward that in the late 18th century Islam had become the dominant aspect of Javanese identity. Islam as popularly practiced at that time was Sufi Islam, which Ricklefs described as a 'mystic synthesis', characterized by the predominance of an Islamic identity, the execution of the five Islamic pillars of Islamic ritual, and the acceptance of local spiritual forces. In the late 19th century, this Islamic identity was challenged by an Islamic revival and reform movements that rejected this Sufi form of Islam. The movements were stimulated by increased contacts with the Islamic heartlands through waves of the *hajj* pilgrimages to Mecca. Reactions also came from villagers who refused to adopt an Islamic identity. They were, and are, popularly called *abangan* people as opposed to *santri*.<sup>13</sup>

In the following centuries, the history of the Islamization of Java is characterized by continuous redefinitions of Islam as part of the construction of Javanese identity. Since the 20th century, the socio-religious division between *abangan* and *santri* manifested in what is called *aliran* politics (*politik aliran*), which means that political parties were ideologically formed according to the two 'streams' (*aliran*) of this socio-religious division. In terms of its political affiliation, Surakarta is known as a bastion of the PDI-P (Party of Indonesian Democracy for Struggle), known for its significant *abangan* support. In the 2014 election, for instance, in Surakarta city (Surakarta Kota), 51.25 % voted PDI-P as opposed to the Islamic party PKS with 6.58 % and PAN, the nationalist party with a Muslim majority of supporters, with 7.65 %.<sup>14</sup> In Klaten, 30.64 % voted PDI-P surpassing Islamic parties like PKS (7.08 %) and PPP (3.08 %), and nationalist parties with great portion of Muslim supporters like PKB (8.8 %), and PAN (8.37 %).<sup>15</sup> This figure is similar to that in Central Java in general, which is also a bastion of PDI-P supporters.

Ricklefs (2008b: 35) has suggested that *aliran* politics have become increasingly irrelevant when Javanese society becomes 'more devoutly Islamic'. The full discussion of this matter is beyond the scope of this chapter, however, since it focuses on the period after Soeharto's regime. It suffices to state that that socio-religious division cannot be ignored in understanding Surakarta even when more people become 'more devoutly Islamic'. After the start of the *Reformasi* era, the balance between the *abangan* and *santri* groups above was challenged by intensifying *dakwah* movements. Purification, in the sense of shunning un-Islamic elements in Islamic practice, has been a dominant theme of the *dakwah* movements. Many puritan *dakwah* groups, which Ricklefs (2012) called 'dakwahists' with a 'revivalist' style,<sup>16</sup> in Surakarta took the lead in Islamic public discourses, like MTA, Salafis, Jamaah Gumuk, and so on. In line with this, *majlis taklim* and *pesantren* had started to blossom everywhere. The political significance of the intensified *dakwah* activities in Surakarta can be seen in the flourishing discourses on radicalism and terrorism. According to one study (al-Makassary et al. 2010), some mosques in Surakarta were indicated of being places of the indoctrination of radicalism. Baidhawiy (2010: 268-85) reported that *majlis taklim* played a significant role in the dissemination of radical ideologies.

Not all groups participate in the purification. Islamic groups affiliated with the NU subscribe to the conservation of local Islamic traditions and cultures. Many other *majlis taklim* linked with this tried to revive local cultures as being the best method of being engaged in *dakwah* as already exemplified by the *Walisongo* (the Nine Saints) centuries ago. Such *dakwah* activities manifest themselves in various forms like mass recitations of the *salawat* (praising and praying for the Prophet) and other expressions of mass devotion. Among the *majlis taklim* concerned with this method of *dakwah* are *Jamuro* (Jamaah Muji Rosul, Congregation



for Praising the Prophet), *Ahbabul Mushthofa*, and *Majlis Riyadhul Jannah*. In response to the challenges posed by new puritan groups, they have been campaigning for a return to the authority of ‘*ulama*’ and *kyai*.

This ever-changing socio-religious landscape in Surakarta provides us with an important entry into the main issue that this book aspires to address, which is religious authority that has been established, contested, competed and exercised through the radio medium. The remainder of this subsection will describe various forms of the *dakwah* media that exist in Surakarta.

## 2.2 *Dakwah media*

In tandem with the increasing *dakwah* activities, modern media communication technologies have gained remarkable importance in Surakarta. This was made possible, among other things, by the loosened State control over the media as result of the *Reformasi*. Along with political decentralization, the media industry spread not only in the capital, Jakarta, but also in local regions (Irawanto 2011: 72). In Surakarta, some new Islamic groups played a significant role in the establishment of Islamic publishing houses.<sup>17</sup> An ICG report demonstrates that Surakarta is one of the important places where the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) publishing industry operates (ICG 2008). They include Al-Alaq, Al-Arafah, Al-Qowam, Al-Aqwam, KCM (Kefayah Cipta Media). Salafi groups play a role in publishing Islamic books and magazines. The first Salafi magazine, *Assunnah*, is based in Surakarta. Ma’had Imam Bukhari, a Salafi school, hosts the publishing house Pustaka Imam Bukhari. Ma’had Al-Ukhuwah, another Salafi school, in Sukoharjo, owns the publishing house Pustaka Al-Minhaj. Other Islamic publishers include At-Tibyan, Maktabah Al-Ghuroba, Al-Abror (MTA) and many more. It can be said that all these publishing houses follow the puritan orientation putting much emphasis on the shunning of local traditions. It is interesting that very few publishing houses are run

by traditionalist groups. Among them is Taman Ilmu run by Habib Novel. This fact informs us about the dominant form of Islamic interpretation fostered by the blossoming of Islamic publishers.<sup>18</sup> As to the electronic media, there are at least two private television stations, TA TV and Solo TV. Although owned by a Christian, TA TV broadcasts Islamic sermons on special days. Solo TV is a non-religiously affiliated station that also provides Islamic sermons on certain days. There are two subscription television stations, MJA TV and MTA TV. Both are Islamic television stations run by the Assegaf mosque and MTA foundation respectively. In addition to national television channels, people in Surakarta can also receive local television channels from surrounding cities such as Yogyakarta and Semarang. As in other cities, the Internet has played a prominent role in Surakarta as can be seen from the remarkable presence of *warung internet* or *warnet* (Internet cafés) accessible to the public. In 2000, as Idaman.com website reported, of the 264 Internet cafés in Java, 42 were located in Yogyakarta and Surakarta (Idaman.com as cited in Hill 2003: 305-6).

Interestingly, among those burgeoning print and electronic media, radio in Surakarta seems to serve a prominent place as shown by newly emerging new radio stations. Following the downfall of Soeharto's regime, over 1,500 radio stations emerged throughout Indonesia. According to data released by the KPID (the Regional Indonesian Commission for Broadcasting) of Central Java, since 2008, at least sixty-nine new radio stations have been registered by the KPID in Central Java, in search for legal recognition.<sup>19</sup> This figure does not include 'unregistered' radio stations. This proves that radio continues to play a prominent role in society. Hari Wiryawan, the writer of the history of broadcasting in Surakarta (Wiryawan 2011), provided me with an interesting piece of information concerning the increasing interest of people of Surakarta in radio broadcasting. He told me that some 300 people came to him to ask his help in dealing with

the broadcasting permit. Although he did not provide a written proof, his account clearly illustrates how high the demand for radio licenses was.<sup>20</sup>

The huge number of radio stations in Surakarta may imply a huge number of listeners. Unfortunately, we do not have enough data on this so that it is difficult to offer a precise figure. At the national level, various surveys indicate that radio consumption tends to be declining. Broadcasting Board of Governors Gallup's research ([www.bbg.gov](http://www.bbg.gov))<sup>21</sup> noted that from 2011 to 2012 radio ownership in Indonesia declined from 46 % to 38.1 %. Based on a BPS (Central Bureau of Statistic) survey ([www.bps.go.id](http://www.bps.go.id)), in 2009, 23.50 % of the population listened to the radio, and this figure has dropped significantly up to 18.57 % in 2012. This is in contrast to television consumption, which was 90.27 % in 2009 and increased up to 91.68 % in 2012. Currently Internet use, especially among the youth and well-educated, tends to increase. Nielsen's survey (*Nielsen Newsletter*, 15, 2011)<sup>22</sup> of 2011 shows that over the last five years Internet use increased from 8 % to 21 %, while in terms of frequency the figure increased from 24 % to 38 %. It is interesting to see the use of mobile phones. According to Gallup's survey in 2012, 8 in 10 Indonesians or 81 % of the population used mobile phones in that year. The survey demonstrates that 87 % of the population aged 15 to 24 owned a mobile phone. The most recent data Nielsen released shows that radio consumption outside Java (37 %) is greater than that in Java (18 %). According to this data survey, radio consumers outside Java listen via radio receivers, while in Java they listen via hand phones.<sup>23</sup>

It is interesting to see the possible relation between the remarkable presence of radio stations and literacy. The figures the BPS of Central Java released show that in 2010 the population's literacy level in Surakarta and surrounding regions was relatively high, including Surakarta 96.68 %, Klaten 89.90 %, Sukoharjo 90.69 %, Wonogiri 82.18 %, Karanganyar 86.91 %, and Sragen 84.36 %

(BPS Jawa Tengah, 2012: 184). Apparently, the habit of listening to the radio (including *dakwah* radio) has little to do with the literacy level, or, more precisely, with illiteracy. Clearly, the assumption that illiterates depend on sound much more than writing, while literates on writing rather than sound seems untenable. This does not deny the possibility that literacy or illiteracy may become a decisive factor in radio consumption and use. I informed about this during my interviews with radio activists in Surakarta. I asked them about why, at the time when the Internet and other more modern media are available, people still use radio, including for *dakwah* purposes. They tended to emphasize various characteristics of the radio medium such as ‘practical’ and ‘portable’. Rudi Herfianto of MTA FM (personal communication, 2012), for instance, said that people are more familiar with radio than with the Internet. Apart from that, radio is an-easy-to-use medium, since it does not require high media literacy. Moko, also of MTA FM, told me that the reason MTA used the radio for *dakwah* activities was that it demanded limited technological skills (personal communication 2012). The owners and activists of *dakwah* radio stations I interviewed do not have data on the numbers of their listeners. In response to my question on how to scale the number, they pointed to the fact that many listeners ask them directly (by phone) or indirectly (sending SMS) if air times have changed without prior notice or when they stop their operations.<sup>24</sup> The declining figure of radio use and consumption as shown above does not mean that its popularity is declining. As noted above, more and more people use mobile phones to listen to radio, not to mention online streaming radio. In other words, the way people listen to the radio has changed.

It should be noted that *dakwah* radio stations emerged as ‘community radio’ (*radio komunitas*), which served to share information and knowledge among certain communities. The responsibility for ownership, management, and production of this

kind of radio is in the hands of the related communities (Jurriëns 2009: 141). At first, they were non-commercial radio stations but some stations successfully transformed into commercial stations without abandoning their religious programs. Elsewhere I have gave the number of *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta, which was more than fifteen (Sunarwoto 2013) and this figure is still valid; but some names of the stations have changed. Some stations remain to exist, others have disappeared, and new ones appeared. This is the current list of *dakwah* radio stations: Salma FM (Klaten), MTA FM (Surakarta), Persada FM (Sragen), Suara Quran/SQ Abrar FM (Karanganyar), Al-Madinah FM (Boyolali), RBA FM (Boyolali), Suara Front FM (FPI Solo) (Sukoharjo), HIZ/RDS FM (Karanganyar), Al-Hidayah FM (Sukoharjo), Darussalaf FM (Sukoharjo), Mentari FM (Surakarta), MH FM (Surakarta), Pitutur Luhur (Karanganyar), Isy Karima FM (Karanganyar), RWS (Radio Wali Songo, Sragen), IC Klaten, Anda FM (Muhammadiyah Klaten), and ABC (Al-Irsyad Surakarta).



ABC, the oldest *dakwah* radio station in Surakarta. *Photo by the author*

*Dakwah* radio is not a new phenomenon in Surakarta. Its history can be traced back to the late 1960s when a group of Muslim preachers took advantage of the radio as a medium for their *dakwah* activities. A number of young activists of the Al-Irsyad University in Surakarta, led by Nasar Aziz with the help of radio technician Salim, established a radio station called ABC radio. Many local renowned preachers delivered their sermons at this radio station.<sup>25</sup> According to some sources,<sup>26</sup> Abdullah Sungkar, Abu Bakar Baasyir, and Abdullah Thufail were important figures behind the *dakwah* on ABC radio. Due to internal conflicts within the ABC radio over the choice of Islamic programs,<sup>27</sup> Sungkar and Baasyir founded another radio station called Radio Dakwah Islamiyah (*RADIS*, Radio for Islamic Propagation). For political reasons the New Order regime banned this radio station which clearly shows its political as well as religious significance in social life.

### 3 Focus, aims, and questions of the research

I have already pointed out the keywords I will use in this study: religious authority, *dakwah* radio, and Surakarta that lead to the focus, aims, and questions of this study. It aims to study religious authority by focusing on *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta. I will investigate various driving forces behind *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta, including religious institutions, religious personalities, and religious discourses. This will help us to understand how *dakwah* radio played a role in the changing patterns of religious authority. Furthermore, I will examine how religious authority has been constructed through the radio medium, and what aspects are influential to it. Therefore, the questions to be answered in this study are: *To what extent and how did dakwah radio play a role in the changing patterns of religious authority?*, and *how was religious authority constructed and competed through the radio medium?*

Although, in this study, I analyze various radio stations, I focus on MTA FM and the personality of Ahmad Sukino as a radio preacher in order to answer these primary questions. The secondary questions of this research are: *How and to what extent did MTA FM play a role in the leadership of Ahmad Sukino? How did he construct his authority through MTA FM in competition with others?*

Since the start of the *Reformation* era, Islam and media in Indonesia has been an emerging field of scholarship as can be seen in the edited volume by Weintraub (2011). However, to my knowledge, there are no other studies on *dakwah* and Islamic radio in Indonesia like the ones I did (Sunarwoto 2012 & 2013). Most of the previous studies focus on newer media like VCD (Naafs 2010; Sutton 2011), the Internet (Hefner 2003; Lim 2005a, 2005b; Ali 2011), and printed media like magazines (Rijal 2005; Pamungkas 2015). This book is a continuation of my previous studies on *dakwah* radio, and it will be a contribution to the current scholarship on the subject.

#### 4 Methodological notes

This study results from two fieldwork periods, from May 2012 to January 2013, and August 2013 to April 2014. During these periods, I interviewed listeners of *dakwah* radio, radio preachers and directors. Most of the time, I used a semi-structured interview technique. In this respect, I prepared some basic questions in advance to be posed to the interviewees. I used this technique more often when I interviewed the directors and preachers of *dakwah* radio stations.

However, most of the time, using informal conversations proved a more convenient technique to get data because many listeners were unwilling to be interviewed formally but they were happy to share their experiences of listening to *dakwah* radio. For me, this was favorable because I did listen to *dakwah* radio



stations even before planning to do my research on this subject so that I could follow their stories about their listening experiences. These informal conversations often took place in a very seemingly 'natural' context, since they were embedded in their daily activities and routines. I regularly visited MTA FM listeners in the parking yard nearby the MTA building where they listened to radio sermons while working. I went there first as a buyer, and after frequent visits, I easily had conversations with them. I also made frequent visits to a masseur whose knowledge of *dakwah* radio was incredible. He knew all Islamic radio stations in Surakarta, their favorite programs and popular preachers by heart. He always turned on his radio before giving me a massage. His comments on the content of the sermons and the preachers always invited me to ask questions about his views on *dakwah* radio. Like sharing ideas, we often discussed a sermon from various angles.

In addition to interviews, I participated in a number of Islamic gatherings linked to *dakwah* radio programs. I often attended *Jihad Pagi* held by MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an), which was broadcast on MTA FM. I also often attended other mass Islamic gatherings related to *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta and three times I joined the Permora Al-Hidayah meetings. Permora stands for Persatuan Monitor Radio (Union of Radio Monitoring), which is a forum for Al-Hidayah FM listeners.

Making notes is an important ethnographic task to record what is happening in the field. During fieldwork, I also made notes on what I had observed. If it was impossible to make notes in detail, I used keywords and rewrote them in detail afterwards. In this case, my memory was decisive in making up the notes. It should be remembered that making notes could give trouble when used in informal conversation because the interlocutor did not want to get the feeling he was being interrogated. In this situation, listening and memorizing were helpful to ensure that my interlocutor was not inconvenienced.



Making recordings is the most important technique in ethnography. I made recordings of interviews, besides making notes. Nevertheless, some informants, especially but not exclusively Salafis, refused this. At first, I was disappointed with their refusal, since the reason they gave seemed illogical: They said that they were afraid that their information would be inaccurate. For me, recording would keep the information accurate. I recorded relevant radio sermons and other religious events that were broadcasted by *dakwah* radio stations. In such cases, I could do it while working on other things at home, like watching television or reading a book.

In addition to fieldwork, this book obtained data from relevant publications, ranging from books and academic journals to magazines and newspapers. The Internet also was a highly useful source for this study. Many *dakwah* radio stations have web sites or at least blog sites. Many recordings of radio sermons were also available on the Internet.

## 5 The structure of the book

Chapter 1 describes the general background of this study including my personal observations, information about my research site Surakarta and its socio-religious life, and the *dakwah* environment. It then explains the focus, aims, questions, and methodology of the research. Chapter 2 is an ethnographic account on the practice of listening to *dakwah* radio. It presents various stories taken from my fieldwork in order to explain who listened to *dakwah* radio, and where and how they listened. It aims to illustrate how Muslims in Surakarta listen to *dakwah* radio within the context of their daily lives and thus it examines the way *dakwah* radio influences the daily lives of Muslims.

Chapter 3 delineates the backgrounds of the radio stations, including the institutions behind them, how they get their money

and whose interests they serve. It examines how *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta established relations with the State and with each other in order to attract the recognition of the public as well as that of the State. It discusses the legal dimensions behind the establishment of *dakwah* radio stations by looking at the regulations on broadcasting. It delineates the role that networking played in the search for public and legal recognition. It will also discuss various religious discourses aired on *dakwah* radio stations, including on the implementation of the *shari'ah*, religious purification and the indigenization of Islam.

Chapter 4 is concerned with various forms of religious authority. It focuses on the rise of radio preachers and how they construct their religious authority. It will start with delineating the concept of religious authority when specifically applied to *dakwah* radio and its listening practices. It will identify how particular forms of media such as radio contributed to the formation of religious authority (how radio preachers claim authority). It then describes the socio-religious backgrounds of radio preachers in order to clarify the development of religious leadership. It provides a case study of Ahmad Sukino of MTA.

Chapter 5 discusses the interplay between language and authority. It focuses on the linguistic aspects of radio sermons and the language commonly used by radio preachers in their sermons. It examines the extent to which their choice of language and linguistic code-switching is related to the construction of authority. It aims to provide the empirical details of the exertion of religious authority through language.

Chapter 6 focuses on the specific practice of exerting religious authority in the form of *fatwa* issuance. It investigates a genre of *tanya-jawab* (question-answer) programs broadcast on radio. It analyzes the *Jihad Pagi* session, as a *tanya-jawab* program, broadcast on MTA FM, as a case study. A particular *fatwa* on the

legal ruling on eating dog meat is studied. It argues that the genre is deeply rooted in the long established Islamic tradition of issuing *fatwa*.

Chapter 7 deals with Salafi radio stations in Surakarta, Central Java. It analyzes how they have played a role in the Salafi *dakwah* movement. It focuses on the internal dynamism of the movement. Characterized by the absence of a central authority, the movement has suffered from splintering into groups, represented by three radio stations, Suara Quran FM, Al-Madinah FM, and Darussalaf FM. They have competed among themselves in attaining legitimacy for their position within the Salafi *dakwah* movement. Each group has tried to become the representative of the 'true Salafi' (*salafi sejati*). Each group has attempted to attract the support of the highest Salafi authorities in the Middle Eastern countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Yemen. This chapter aims to show how Salafi *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta have become an important medium for this kind of contestation of authority.

Chapter 8 presents the concluding remarks which will answer the research questions formulated in chapter one and various suggestions for further research.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> NU is the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia, established by a number of senior ulama led by Hasyim Asy'ari in 1926.

<sup>2</sup> For a brief ethnographic account of the controversy over the *rukyat* and *hilar* methods and its practical manifestations in Javanese Muslim society, see Möller 2005: 261-66.

<sup>3</sup> In Indonesian (italics) and Javanese (non-italics) '*Mereka lebih percaya sopan santun, akhlak. Pokoke nek wonge sing lomo, wonge apik, yo wis kuwi agomoku. Kasare begitu*'.

<sup>4</sup> In Indonesian: '*Keyakinannya atau imannya itu tergantung gebyar yang dilihat ... Siapa yang bisa membuat gebyar yang hebat, dia akan diikuti orang*'.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Habib Novel bin Muhammad al-Aydrus, Surakarta, 12 January 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Interview with Choirul R. Suparjo of the Surakarta FPI branch, Sukoharjo, 23 December 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Interview with Susanto, Surakarta, 23 December 2013.

- <sup>8</sup> The brief history of Islamic institutions in Surakarta can be found in Mulyadi & Soedarmono et al. 1999: 148-155.
- <sup>9</sup> 'Benarkah ada 'perang' radio dakwah?' *Solopos*, 6 January 2012. I would like to thank Pak Suwarmin Mulyadi, via Pak Priyono Mb, both of *Solopos* daily, for sending several reports on *dakwah* radio in Surakarta, issued on *Solopos*, through the email dated 9 April 2014.
- <sup>10</sup> 'Tidak ada persaingan radio dakwah', *Solopos* 11 December 2011.
- <sup>11</sup> Darul Islam (DI) was established in 1948 in West Java by Kartosuwirjo (d. 1962) as an Islamic-inspired anti-colonial movement with the aim of establishing an Islamic state called the Islamic State of Indonesia (NII). During its history, it became an anti-government movement. It did not disappear with the Kartosuwiryo's death in 1962, and even ideologically, it remains influential to clandestine groups up to this day. On the early history of DI, see, for instance, Van Dijk 1981; Boland 1982: 54-74; Hirokoshi 1975: 58-86; and Formichi 2012; and on DI and its relation to some current Islamic groups, see ICG 2005.
- <sup>12</sup> Of course, this estimation is debatable, since not all members of the population were included in the census. Ricklefs (2012: 501) gives different numbers, based on information of the then Surakarta mayor, Joko Widodo, which is 26 %.
- <sup>13</sup> The social division of *santri* and *abangan* was first popularized by the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz in the 1960s. Soejatno categorized Surakartans into four social groups, including *santri priyayi* (religiously observant aristocrats and gentry), *abangan priyayi* (non-observant aristocrats), *santri wong cilik* (observant little or common people), and *abangan wong cilik* (non-observant little or common people). See Soejatno 1974: 99.
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.merdeka.com/pemilu-2014/pdip-rajai-perolehan-suara-pileg-di-solo.html> (accessed 23 February 2015).
- <sup>15</sup> <http://www.solopos.com/2014/04/11/hasil-pemilu-soloraya-inilah-perolehan-hasil-suara-parpol-di-klaten-pdip-3064-501695> (accessed 23 February 2015).
- <sup>16</sup> Ricklefs (2012: 515-6) defines a 'dakwahist' as 'one who, or that which embraces Dakwahism'. Dakwahism is a social and political project whose principal aim is 'to seek a more perfect social order by actively propagating what it regards as a correct understanding of the faith, its moral standards and its ritual obligation'.
- <sup>17</sup> For the booming of Islamic books and their publishers at the national scale, see Watson 2005b: 177-210.
- <sup>18</sup> In his lecture in Temanggung, Central Java, Parsono Agus Waluyo, a religious teacher and the director of Pitutur Luhur FM in Karanganyar bemoaned the scarcity of culturally-oriented Islamic books in Surakarta. CD Pitutur Luhur Vol. 9: 4, which was also aired on Pitutur Luhur FM on 25 November 2013.
- <sup>19</sup> This figure is based on 'Data Proses Perizinan Lembaga Penyiaran Komisi Penyiaran Daerah Jawa Tengah'. <http://kpid.jatengprov.go.id/> (accessed 5 March 2013). The data shows that in the process, there were some radio stations not eligible to broadcast, while some others had received broadcasting permit.
- <sup>20</sup> Personal communication with Hary Wiryawan, Surakarta 13 March 2014.
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.bbg.gov/wp-content/media/2012/10/gallup-indonesia-brief.pdf> (accessed 18 February 2015).
- <sup>22</sup> [http://www.agbnielsen.net/Uploads/Indonesia/Nielsen\\_Newsletter\\_Mar\\_2011-Ind.pdf](http://www.agbnielsen.net/Uploads/Indonesia/Nielsen_Newsletter_Mar_2011-Ind.pdf) (accessed 16 February 2015).
- <sup>23</sup> <http://www.nielsen.com/id/en/press-room/2014/nielsen-konsumsi-media-lebih-tinggi-di-luar-jawa.html> (accessed 16-2-2015); also <http://radioclinic.com/2012/10/17/masihkah-radio-berjaya-konsumsi-media-di-indonesia-2012/> (accessed 16 February 2015).

- <sup>24</sup> *Dakwah* radio stations often stop operation for a moment or forever for a variety of reasons such as technical or financial reasons.
- <sup>25</sup> Personal communication with Tamrin Ghozali and Abdullah, both of Al-Irsyad Surakarta, 16 July 2012.
- <sup>26</sup> <http://ansharuttauhid.com/read/publikasi/167/lebih-dalam-mengenal-ust-abu-bakar-baasyir/#sthash.oIVn8ZhY.dpbs> (accessed 23 February 2015).
- <sup>27</sup> Tamrin Ghozali and Abdullah of Al-Irsyad I interviewed avoided mentioning the internal conflict that led to the establishment of *RADIS* by Abdullah Sungkar dan Abu Bakar Baasyir.

## CHAPTER TWO

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# LISTENING TO *DAKWAH* RADIO

## SOME STORIES FROM THE FIELD

### 1 Introduction

This chapter aims to describe how Muslims in Surakarta listened to *dakwah* radio. In this account, I will highlight some important findings and reflect on them. During the fieldwork, I focused on two radio stations: MTA FM and Al-Hidayah FM. Both share the same mission, which is to propagate Islam (*dakwah*). However, they have different *dakwah* agendas. MTA FM aims to return Muslims to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and to purify Islam from any 'un-Islamic' local traditions and customs. With this aim, MTA FM tries to contribute to the formation of *khair ummah* (the best *ummah*). Al-Hidayah FM is concerned with Islamic teachings based on *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* (Followers of the Sunnah and the Muslim community) or, more narrowly, based on the four Islamic schools of law (*madhhabs*). It attempts to allow local traditions that accord with Islamic teachings regardless of the absence of textual bases that support them. The different trajectories that both have taken

are crucial in determining their different methods and aims in conducting *dakwah* via the radio.

*Dakwah* radio has become one of the crucial infrastructures of Islamic propagation in Surakarta as shown by the blossoming of radio stations whose main aim is to spread Islamic messages among the people. The fact that these stations are linked to Muslim groups or institutions indicates that they have become an important medium for *dakwah* purposes. The groups and institutions' different *dakwah* trajectories have become the driving force behind the dynamics of *dakwah* radio movements. The establishment of *dakwah* radio stations has given Muslims with more opportunities to participate in *dakwah* movements. Although not always easily recognized, it is, to a large extent, clear that their participation has contributed to the creation of a good *dakwah* environment. More importantly, this also has contributed to the formation of the Islamic *ummah*.

The power of the radio is important to note. It has enabled Muslim listeners who live in segmented areas to become involved in the trajectories of *dakwah* movements by becoming members or supporters. However, they also have their own agendas that differ from those of *dakwah* movements. By means of the radio medium, they were able to enhance their religious knowledge and to live their lives in accordance with Islamic guidance as a result of ethical self-discipline and self-education made possible by their habit of listening to *dakwah* radio. The ubiquitous presence of radios has enabled them to know about Islam without directly participating in gatherings in Islamic centers of education like *madrasah*, *masjid*, and *majlis taklim*. They listen to Islamic programs aired on radio while they are at home, work in the office and in other places. The separation of sound from its source, which is the basic character of radio, has liberated them from contextual, spatial, and temporal burdens the Islamic centers demand., especially from co-presence and face-to-face communication. To grasp Islam, they did not need

to go to these centers. To become pious, they did not have to be guided by a religious teacher.

## 2 Medium for the Invisible

In understanding its basic characteristics, various theorists have identified radio as ‘the invisible’ (Lewis and Booth 1989), ‘the forgotten’ (Pease and Dennis 1997) and ‘the blind’ (Crisell 1994). Lewis and Booth (1989) called radio ‘the invisible medium’ because the importance of radio has been hardly noticed in academic discourse and policymaking. Because of its invisibility, radio has also often been neglected and was forgotten by many. That is why Pease and Dennis (1997) identified radio as ‘the forgotten medium’. The invisibility does not mean that the role of radio as a popular medium in society has entirely disappeared. Instead, it is from its invisibility that radio derives its power in society. Andrew Crisell identifies radio as a ‘blind medium’ in which receivers can only receive its messages in the form of noise and silence (Crisell 1994:3). The code that the radio wave sends consists only of words. Crisell also called radio a secondary medium since listening to it is just an accompaniment of other activities. In other words, for listeners, listening to radio is not a primary activity. However, this may imply that listening to radio is unintentional but it can be said that there are times when listening to radio is indeed primary, depending on the programs that listeners choose to listen to. Rather than to consider it a secondary medium, Tacchi (1997) moves further and she sees radio sound as a textured soundscape of the home. She argues that radio sound can be understood as part of the material culture of the home like other material cultures such as furniture which contribute to the home environment. Her analysis on radio in Britain shows how radio sound has contributed to the formation of the social self. Thus, although usually private, listening to radio has a social role (Tacchi 1997).



The social, or *pseudo*-social (the term Tacchi also uses), role of listening to radio in the domestic context is instructive here, especially in the context of 'the invisible'. While Tacchi located her discussion within a specific context, namely the domestic environment, I intend to underline the social role of listening to *dakwah* radio, which is characterized by the capacity of individuals to engage with the radio sound, in both domestic and individual (semi-public) environments. Such an engagement is more often invisible rather than visible to the public. Listening to the radio while working in an office or a shop, for instance, does not automatically mean that it is done for public purposes. Rather, the purpose is more often private instead of public, such as for self-education and private entertainment.

Moreover, the invisible can be grasped from the power relation between the listeners of *dakwah* radio and centers of Islamic institutions and religious authorities, such as *masjid*, *madrasah*, *majlis taklim*, *pesantren*, and '*ulama*'. Within the institutions, religious authority is in the hand of mentors and teachers whom students should follow. Relatively independent of these institutions, listeners to *dakwah* radio have more space for the invention or production of meaning. Here lies the concept of agency, which is a person's capability to be the source or originator of an act. Related to agency, Rapport and Overing (2000) emphasize the importance of creativity and imagination. Analysing the female Muslim movement in Egypt, Mahmood (2002: 206) defines agency as 'the capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles (whether individual or collective)'.

In contrast to speaking, listening and hearing tend to be considered as passive acts. Yet, listening can be divided into active and passive listening. Active listening is that people can react to and, thus, understand what they listen to. Passive listening is that people cannot react to and make sense of what they listen to. The

division is not always valid, especially not in the case of religious sermons. As Daniel Gross (2009) has elaborated, the passive dimension of listening occupies an important part in listening culture. Specifically referring to the Christian tradition, Gross (2009: 69) said, '... listening, like speaking, is a highly complex, rhetorical activity that warrants constant practice and reflection. The active listener-as-judge tells only part of the story while passive listening has a public function beyond indoctrination'. Gross uses the term 'public ear' to refer to the public character of listening. Gross (2009: 71) explains further that this public character cannot be reduced to the capacity for judgment. Instead, he emphasizes that the passive listener's agency lies in their capacity to construct and interpret a discourse.

However, Gross (2009: 71) seems to prioritize public listening or listening together over listening in private. This can be seen from his view that 'when listening shifts definitively from a public act to an intimate experience ... new dysfunctions of the social ear emerge'. As a result, he pays no attention to 'listening by oneself' as it is in the case of listening to the radio. The relation between radio and listeners is often described as intimate. Such intimacy can only be created through sound, which is, of course, invisible. The intimacy not always works out, especially not when the receiver refuses to hear the message being sent. He or she has only to decide what to listen to and what not. The receiver has only two choices, either to listen or not to listen. On one hand, the receiver has to concentrate on what he/she hears, and, on the other, has the freedom to filter and to refuse what is to be heard. Seen from this, listening to radio or other audio media is a matter of personal choice. The same applies to their refusal to listen to other radio stations. The extent to which intimacy between *dakwah* radio stations and their listeners can be constructed varies from one station to another. For instance, listeners of MTA FM tend to be like a one family in which the central MTA leader is the father

figure. This can be seen very clearly, for example, from a program called *Asli Indonesia*. This is a live program where listeners send greetings to other listeners. Mostly, the first name to which the greeting is addressed is Pak Sukino (Father Sukino). The word *Pak*, which means father,<sup>1</sup> underlines the fatherhood of the MTA leader. This is different from the listeners to Al-Hidayah FM, who never or rarely if ever, mentions Soni Parsono, the director of the radio. The central figure of this radio station seems to be Habib Syech, a renowned Muslim preacher of Hadrami descent.

Other *dakwah* radio stations do not have such prominent personalities whose voice is able to animate the attention of huge numbers of listeners. The extent to which a *dakwah* radio station is able to mobilize people to listen to it very much depends on the degree of intimacy it is able to create. The quality of the voice plays an important part in creating intimacy. Most MTA FM listeners related the impression they had of the voice of Ahmad Sukino, the MTA leader. Some of them used terms like ‘soft’ (*empuk*), ‘sonorous’ (*merdu*), and ‘charismatic’ (*berwibawa*) to describe his voice. Because of these qualities, said my brother-in-law one day, Sukino captures the attention of huge numbers of listeners. It is also partly because of these qualities that these figures enjoy their fame as celebrities.

Besides intimacy, *dakwah* radio has played a role in the creation of a relatively autonomous space for Muslims in general and Muslim women and youths in particular to express their views on Islam and for how to live according to Islamic practices. By ‘relatively autonomous Islamic space’ I mean a space that is detached from and independent of existing Islamic spaces like *masjid*, *madrasah*, and *majlis taklim*. To learn about Islam, Muslims do not need to attend religious sermons in the *masjid* or go to the *madrasah* or join the *majlis taklim*. Within the autonomous space, the direct, face-to-face communication between students and teachers becomes relatively irrelevant. Muslims can provide themselves

with self-education. However, it does not mean that the existing educational institutions become irrelevant. The existing *dakwah* radio stations are affiliated to Muslim organizations, including educational institutions like *pesantren* and *majlis taklim*. In other words, *dakwah* radio stations are not independent of their mother institutions. Listening is always socially situated and constructed. The social position of listeners determines their understanding of the message. Although listening to *dakwah* radio at home is often a private activity, it cannot automatically be conceived as absolutely disconnected from its social context.

It is not always easy to create intimacy, especially not when related to the source of *dakwah* radio. The degree to which intimacy can be created depends partly on the source. The separation of sound from its source is the salient character of radio as the result of technological reproduction. As Jonathan Berne has put it, this separation has led to the question of the origin and the copy of the sound—sound fidelity. Berne (2006: 219) argues that sound fidelity is ‘more about faith in the social function and organization of machines than it is about the relation of a sound to its source’. Brian Larkin puts forward that ‘the particularity of radio as a medium was the separation of sound from source, of voice from body’. In this regard, the reception of radio is replete with a variety of assumptions, including religious ones (Larkin 2008: 50-56; Larsson 2011; for the Indonesian context, Suryadi 2011: 124-160).

Therefore, it is worth discussing how people perceive *dakwah* radio. It can roughly be said that the people in Surakarta do not always take it seriously. Some of them see listening to *dakwah* radio as fun just like listening to other radio stations. For them, what differentiate *dakwah* radio stations are the programs they provide. It is not surprising that Dian Nafi, the director of Pesantren Al-Muayyad Windan, stated that *dakwah* radio is a kind of fun and, consequently, not to be taken too seriously. That is the reason

why the radio station, which he, and his colleagues, founded, is not considered a *dakwah* radio station, regardless of the fact that many programs it airs are in fact related to Islam.<sup>2</sup> Sholehah MC, a renowned Muslim preacher in Surakarta, views that there is no problem with the emergence of many *dakwah* radio stations as long as the content of the *dakwah* is good.<sup>3</sup>

The fidelity of *dakwah* radio in Surakarta has become a kind of competition between its proponents and its opponents. For its opponents, radio as a medium of *dakwah* is considered to have contributed to the banalization of Islam. Radio is not a proper medium through which Islam should be understood. This kind of criticism resonates with the overconfidence of its ardent listeners who, in understanding Islam, tend to be satisfied with their over-reliance on what they have heard on radio rather than following it up with a return to its original sources, either the Qur'an and the Sunnah, or other long established authorities such as *kyai* (Javanese Muslim leader), '*ulama*' (Muslim scholars), *madrasah*, *masjid*, *pesantren* and the like.

### **3 *Dakwah* radio in the daily life of Muslims in Surakarta**

Who listen to *dakwah* radio? Where and when does listening to it mostly take place? And how do people listen to it? Listeners of *dakwah* radio can be categorized into three kinds. The first one consists of listeners who are members of the mother institutions of *dakwah* radio stations. They are affiliated listeners. In Surakarta, members of MTA are the main listeners of MTA FM and they listen to MTA FM on a regular basis. Among their favorite religious sermon programs of MTA FM are *Jihad Pagi*, *Ustad On Air* (Teacher On Air) and *Fajar Hidayah* (Dawn of God's Guidance). For them, listening to these programs can be like attending *majlis taklims*. Their connection with MTA FM is stronger than that of listeners of other radio stations. This is because MTA FM has

a central figure whose sermons have more or less become the embodiment of the organization. He is Ahmad Sukino, the central MTA leader. Al-Hidayah FM, whose listeners are members of Majelis Al-Hidayah, has no such central figure. Even Soni Parsono, the director of Al-Hidayah FM and leader of Majelis Al-Hidayah, is not the most respected preacher of this radio station. Listeners of the second kind consist of the sympathizers of these radio stations. They have no affiliation with the mother organizations of these *dakwah* radio stations. They are non-affiliated listeners. Their connection with favorite *dakwah* radio stations will probably encourage them to join these institutions. The listeners of the last kind are common listeners who take benefit from listening to any radio station either for increasing their religious knowledge or for other purposes. They may turn into affiliated listeners or sympathizers, depending on the degree of attractiveness of the radio stations they listen to in the future.

In general, at present listening to *dakwah* radio in Indonesia is private rather than public. The semi-public events of listening may also be found within the domestic environment. Portable radios have enabled people to take them with them and to switch them on almost everywhere. Access to radio channels has also been facilitated by the emergence of the mobile phone technology with radio channel facilities. During my fieldwork, I found that Muslims in Surakarta and surrounding regions listened to *dakwah* radio while working or enjoying their leisure times. This underlines the secondary medium of *dakwah* radio. However, this demonstrates that *dakwah* radio is really embedded in the social life of Muslims in Surakarta. Home, working place, and food stall are among the places where we can find Muslims listen to *dakwah* radio.

Home is the common place where people spend most of the time they listen to radio. My personal experience confirms this. My family and I live with my uncle-in-law who often listens to

*dakwah* radio in the morning and at night. He listens to *dakwah* radio before leaving for work. He also listens to it at night especially after praying 'isha' at the mosque until he goes to sleep. Members of MTA may be the most active in tuning in on MTA FM. Their intimacy with MTA FM is evident from their detailed knowledge of its programs. Morning, afternoon and evening are the times when they routinely listen to MTA FM. For example, I met an old woman in Boyolali, a member of MTA, who was able to mention not only Islamic programs but also the music programs MTA FM airs. She could even tell me the times when these programs were regularly aired. Within the context of rural space, regular audition of *dakwah* radio has become a sort of new experience of the changing rural soundscape. As Schafer said, rural soundscape is characterized by its quietness, which was in the pre-Industrial era only interrupted by noise of war and noise of religion (Schafer 1994: 49). Nowadays, the picture of rural areas has changed remarkably thanks to modernization.

The soundscape of rural areas has become more and more crowded with the loudness of modern sounds such as those of motorcycles and loudspeakers. Freek Colombijn (2007: 266) said that in rural areas loud sounds are part of modernity. While the modern soundscapes can be considered secular, the soundscape of *dakwah* radio introduces sacred dimensions into the domestic environment in particular and into the rural environment in general. Rural people have become aware of the need to incorporate Islamic audition into their daily lives. Moreover, as Jo Ann Tacchi (1997) has argued, as a material culture, the sound of radio plays a role as part of the texture of the home and contributes to the home environment. Such a texture of the home needs no rationalization or linguistic expression. It is experiential.

Besides home, working places are also the places where listening to *dakwah* radio often takes place. One day, 9 June 2012, I went to a local health center called *Puskemas* (center for people's

health) in Klaten to pick up some medicine. I met *Pak Mantri* (a paramedic) who was working there. In the corner of his working room, a small radio receiver was turned on. I was struck by the fact he was listening attentively to an Islamic program aired by Radio YATAIN.<sup>4</sup> This in fact was not the first time I saw him listening to *dakwah* radio. In fact, I once met him also to get medicine and he was also listening to an Islamic program on *dakwah* radio, also Radio YATAIN. What interested me was that he did the same thing as he did before. He seriously made note of what he heard on the radio. Curiously, I asked him about his habit of listening to *dakwah* radio. He answered that he spent most of his leisure time either at home or in office listening to *dakwah* radio. 'If I am not busy [working at home], I listen to it,' he clarified.

The other working place I found where people listened to *dakwah* radio was *warung hik*, typical street sales stalls in Surakarta and surroundings.<sup>5</sup> On 12 June 2012, I met a single (unmarried) woman who was listening to *dakwah* radio while caring for her *warung*. After that, I often came to her *warung*, just to drink tea or coffee and I frequently chatted with her. Besides listening to *dakwah* radio in her *warung* she often listened to it at home, especially in the morning while she was cooking food to sell in her *warung*. For her, listening to *dakwah* radio increased her knowledge of Islam. She had converted from Christianity to Islam some two years ago. In addition to listening to *dakwah* radio, she routinely went to the *pengajian* in a mosque closed to her home. To increase her knowledge of Islam, she read Islamic books about the basic practices of Islam. Therefore, for her, listening to *dakwah* radio was complementary to attending *pengajian* and reading Islamic books.

The fact that young Muslims also listen to *dakwah* radio is interesting to note. Most Al-Hidayah FM's listeners, for instance, consist of school and university students. Their most favorite program is *salawat* songs, especially by Habib Syech. They spend





A female member of MTA caring her stall. *Photo by the author.*



Ibu Siti showing an Islamic book. Next to her is a radio set. *Photo by the author.*

most of their leisure time listening to Al-Hidayah FM and they send greetings to each other. Besides *salawat*, they also listen to Islamic sermons. Some students told me that by listening to Islamic sermons, their knowledge of Islam could increase. An announcer of one *dakwah* radio station once told me a story of his colleague's young brother who, after several times listening to Radio YATAIN, became interested in understanding Islam only from the Qur'an instead of from both the Qur'an and the *hadith* (the prophetic tradition). He is said to have been reluctant to perform the Friday prayers only because the Qur'an did not mention the obligation to do so. This gives us a clear picture of how *dakwah* radio has become the site for the creation of an autonomous Islamic space in which listeners can educate themselves about Islam. In this respect, listening has become situated within a very private space.

Another story tells us of a similar case. The story is about Ari, a *Si Omay* seller from Cirebon, West Java. He came to Surakarta some four years ago as a mobile *Si Omay* street vendor. He became more and more apt to listen to religious sermons after listening to MTA FM. Two years after running a business for his boss, he himself has now become the boss of four employees and he has four mobile kiosks. He acknowledged that the success he had in running his business was inseparably linked with his understanding of and his living like a Muslim the way he once heard on MTA FM. One of the important lessons he derived from listening to MTA FM was about honesty. He said that in his sermon Ahmad Sukino, the central leader of MTA, often emphasized the importance for Muslims to be honest including in doing business. Being honest made Muslims relaxed and safe. He said, 'A businessman [should] be truthful. Do not oppose our boss. The point is, do not be spendthrift'. Sukino's radio sermons taught him much about the importance of *tawakkul* (trust in God's Will) in dealing with his business. He allotted some money to *sadaqah* (charitable gift). What is interesting to note from Ari's story is

that he has never attended Islamic sermons in the MTA building, nor had he become an MTA. The only thing he did was listening to MTA FM during and after work. He told me that in the future he would join the *Jihad Pagi* sessions. One of his other stories was that when he paid a visit to his home village, he once debated with his friends in Cirebon. In the debate, he had challenged his friends' views on the Islamic traditions the people in his village commonly kept up. He told his friends that those traditions were un-Islamic because they have no textual basis (*tidak ada tuntunannya*) in the Qur'an. When his friend asked him how he knew that there was no basis in the Qur'an, he said that he heard this from *dakwah* radio in Surakarta, which was MTA FM.

#### 4 Public Reasoning

An interesting place where listening to *dakwah* radio regularly takes place is a place close to the MTA building close to the Mangkunegaran palace. Every Sunday morning, MTA members who sold food and drink, souvenirs, and Muslim clothes spent some of their leisure time to listen to radio sermons aired live by MTA FM from the building. While waiting for costumers, they paid attention to what was being discussed inside the building as if they were attending a *pengajian*. Sometimes they discussed among themselves about the topics the *ustadh* was explaining inside the building. The way they discussed them was certainly not the same as that of the *ustadh*, since they relied more on their daily experiences rather than on the texts. Listening to *dakwah* radio within this kind of settings reminds us of the concept of 'bourgeois public sphere' that Jürgen Habermas (1964; 1991) has popularized.<sup>6</sup> While Habermas emphasizes civil society's capacity to influence the State's policy, informal discussions by *dakwah* radio listeners on religious matters may be better placed within the formation of what Hirschkind (2006: 107) has termed 'an Islamic counterpublic', a counterpublic 'that cuts across the

modern distinctions between State and society, public and private, that are central to the public sphere as a normative institution of modern democratic polities'. At the heart of this counterpublic is the idea of Islamic public reasoning that is embedded within media practice. Below I will present some ethnographic examples of how this public reasoning took place.

One day, I sat on a public bench below a tree, where a number of women were also sitting minding their temporary stalls. The huge number of participants in the event resulted in lively economic activities around the building where the *pengajian* was being held. In addition to the MTA bookstore, temporary food stalls had been set up around the MTA building. There were also beggars who begged for some money from the congregation members. Various local snacks such as *lumpia* (or *loempia*) and *bakwan* (fried snack) were sold. One of the sellers sold bottled water named *Kafur*, produced by CV Al-Abrar, a division of the MTA foundation and was only distributed by MTA members. I was struck by the fact that two women were attentively listening to the *pengajian* through their mobile phone. This made me want to interview them but in the end I did not, however. Instead, I just enjoyed sitting with them and listening in to their discussions. There were some interesting discussions while I sat with them (I was not involved, but only watching and hearing). The discussions were rapid and flowing along with the discussions that took place inside the building. They covered important subjects along with the subjects they were hearing from the building. They responded to the *pengajian* by having their own discussions.

One discussion started in the midst of listening to the *pengajian* that was taking place inside the MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an) building. One of the topics being dealt with was bribery. As they heard from their radio sets, Ahmad Sukino was answering a question about the Islamic ruling on bribery in the case of the election of a village leader (*lurah*). It was common

that the candidates gave some money to voters before the election to vote for them. Ahmad Sukino explained that this kind of money was considered bribery and that accepting money from the candidates was lawful if the receiver did not intend to vote for him because of money but for other reasons. The receiver had no compulsion to vote for him. It was interesting that a married couple selling Muslim dress responded to this. When Ahmad Sukino said that if the candidate required him to vote for him, it was bribery, the wife said 'That's bribery!' And when Ahmad Sukino said that if the candidate gave him money, he may accept it,' she said, imitating Ahmad Sukino, 'that's true! ... If I were given a gift [*bungkusane*] I would accept it, but I would not vote for you'. Her husband interrupted her by saying, '*Neng [bungkusane] ditolak* (But [the gift] should be rejected!)'. She responded immediately, '*O bungkusane boten ditolak, ditampi mawon noh. Lha niko ustade nerang(ke) kon nampi kok*' (No, I will not reject the gift, just accept it. The *Ustadh* [Ahmad Sukino] told [us] to accept it). Following Ahmad Sukino's explanation, she considered that accepting such money from the candidate was not sinful. Commenting on the election, her husband said that it was not a good idea to abstain in elections. We have to vote. If we do not like any of the candidates, we can make our votes illegitimate by crossing all of them out. By doing so, it is impossible for the election committee to misuse our votes by giving them to one of the candidates. This practice undoubtedly has become the symbol of the people's hostility against the corrupt systems the State imposes on them.

Another theme came up during the conversation about polygamy. The theme had started at the very beginning. That was when I bought some snacks, and asked if all the sellers there were MTA members. One of them gave me an interesting answer. In refined Javanese (*Jawa halus*) words, she said, '*Ten mriki mboten wonten tiyang MTA*' (There is no MTA member here). Then, she

clarified that if I was looking for a prospective wife from among MTA members, I was wrong. Yes, of course, they all were married. The woman who was talking to me was with her husband, taking care of their stall. In response to her, I explained that with the one wife I have I was busy enough so that I could not imagine what would happen if I had more than one. 'But you can have more', she responded. In Islam, she continued, a man can have four wives. Shortly after that, like gossiping, while standing she told me the story of one of her friends who had two wives. 'He is a very lucky man,' she opened the story, 'because both his wives are *salihah* (pious women)'. They all are loyal to their husband. They lived in the same house harmoniously and there were no quarrels between them. They often washed the laundry together. The old wife had eight children, and the second eleven children. She was impressed by the fact that with such a huge number of children, they could live together in harmony. She said that that their children often ate together from a big tray. Apart from that, the wives were *amanah* (trustful) in the way they managed the household. For her, being *salihah* is the highest standard in becoming an ideal wife. Reacting to her statement, one of her friends said that it was not that easy to accept polygamy. Soon this short discussion ended and another conversation came up. A question popped up about how to remain patient when seeing the ex-girlfriend of her husband. The second woman commented that she herself was often envious to see the ex-girlfriend of her husband irrespective of the fact that nothing had happened between them. It was difficult, she stressed, to accept another woman next to one's husband. She also had her own story of her neighbor, a girl, who was taken as the second wife by a religious teacher. For her, the girl was very stupid for she was willing to be married. At first, the teacher wanted to have his son marry that girl but, without any clear reason, he married the girl himself. She also told the story of a woman whom she had met in her stall. The woman once asked Ahmad Sukino to inform



the *pengajian* that she was looking for a prospective husband. She was divorced a couple of months before because she had refused to accept that her (ex)-husband wanted to take a second wife.

While they disagreed on polygamy, they did share the same opinion that *nikah sirri*<sup>7</sup> (unregistered marriage) was not good. The first woman who tended to agree on polygamy said, '*neng nek dadi wong wedok gelem dinikah sirri, kuwi wong goblok banget*' (but if a woman is willing to be married in *sirri*, that [woman is] very stupid). She argued that a husband could leave his *sirri* wife whenever he wants. Some fragments of discussion above demonstrate how deliberation of 'common' people was established. They entail the embeddedness of discourses on social practices common to those people. The first one, on bribery, is indicative of the consciousness of 'lay Muslims' of the unjust corruptive political system. On the one hand, they were aware of the corruptive practices within the election of village heads (*Pilkades*),<sup>8</sup> including bribery. On the other hand, following Ahmad Sukino's *fatwa*, they reacted against these practices not by vividly rejecting 'money politics' but by accepting it without giving their votes to its perpetrators. The discussion about polygamy and *nikah sirri* is also socially and politically embedded in Indonesia's national discourse, especially among Muslims. Roughly speaking, there are three groups in disagreement on this matter. The first group includes those who consider both polygamy and *nikah sirri* as lawful, because it is in accord with the teaching of Islam. The majority of Muslims in Indonesia holds this opinion. Second are those who think that only polygamy is lawful, while *nikah sirri* is not. Polygamy is lawful, because it is supported by the primary Islamic sources, especially the Qur'an. Thirdly, some argue that both polygamy and *nikah sirri* are not allowed. The latter's proponents are feminist activists.<sup>9</sup> MTA, with which the women above are affiliated, is of the opinion that in fact there is no *nikah sirri*, as long as a marriage is conducted by presenting Islamically valid witnesses. The problem, for MTA, is that economically

underdeveloped people have difficulty to follow the procedures of marriage as regulated by the government. Consequently, many Muslims engage in *nikah sirri* as a way out of forbidden adultery. In response to the government's plan to ban *nikah sirri*, the leader of MTA, Ahmad Sukino said, 'If [the government] wants to issue a regulation [on the ban on *nikah sirri*], the requirements for marriages must be made easy. Remove the unaffordable expenses of marriage since many people are economically powerless. If it is so [i.e. removed], do believe that there will be no unregistered marriage'.<sup>10</sup>

## 5 Javanese and their Changing Religious Identity

Brian Larkin maintains that media have become one of the important infrastructures of modern society. By infrastructure, he means 'both technical and cultural systems that create institutionalized structures whereby goods of all sorts circulate, connecting and binding people into collectivities' (Larkin 2008: 6). As an infrastructure, *dakwah* radio has played a significant role in (re) shaping the structure of Muslim society in Surakarta in particular and in Java in general. Thinking about *dakwah* radio as a kind of infrastructure enables us to unveil its ideological function to create new Islamic subjects. In this regard, piety, moral comportment and ethics play an important role in the formation of their new identity as *santris*. The impacts *dakwah* radio has on the social structure can clearly be seen from the participation of a group of Muslims who, following Clifford Geertz (1960: 5-7), can be categorized as *abangan* in using *dakwah* radio for self-education. A social structure is neither static nor fixed. Instead, it is always fluid and subject to change and modification. Geertz has introduced three social structural nuclei of Javanese society, including *abangan*, *santri* and *priyayi* (syncretic aristocrats). This division should be seen as an analytical tool rather than as a fixed set of categories.



The media play a significant role in molding and reshaping the social structure of Javanese Muslim society in line with its religious orientations. In this respect, *dakwah* radio in Surakarta has played a considerable role in the on-going process of social (re) structuration. With their participation in *dakwah* radio, Javanese Muslims have much opportunity to self-educate themselves about their religion. They are able to study Islam independently of the existing education institutions such as *masjid*, *madrasah* and *majlis taklim*. In this regard, *abangan* Muslim groups are not an exception. The invisible nature of radio has enabled them to understand and, to some extent, interpret Islam more creatively in accordance with their Javanese environments. Two interrelated phenomena can clearly be observed from this self-education of *abangan* Muslims by way of listening to *dakwah* radio, including ‘becoming *santri*’ and ‘purification of Islam’. Many listeners testified that through their listening to *dakwah* radio they became more aware of Islam and closer to the *santri* group. In line with this, they tried to distance themselves from *abangan* traditions they used to practice. They searched for Islam that was authentic, based solely on the Qur’an and the Sunnah (the prophetic practices). This purification has taken place after the collapse of the New Order in line with the intensification of political Islam (Hasan 2006: 22-5). In addition to the two phenomena above, becoming Muslims is another phenomenon that is clearly stimulated by the presence of *dakwah* radio stations. Some listeners came from a non-Muslim background as clearly stated in their testimonies. In the paragraphs that follow, I discuss these phenomena as becoming ‘born-again Muslims’ and then ‘becoming Muslims’.

### 5.1 *Becoming born-again Muslims*

The change from being *abangan* to being *santri* can be seen in the phenomenon of ‘born-again Muslims’. They were born as Muslims, but they became familiar with Islam only later in life. How did this

process take place? Only focusing on the role of *dakwah* radio means to do injustice to other factors that motivate these *abangan* to get closer to the orthodoxy of Islam. *Dakwah* radio is not the only cause of their conversion to the *santri* identity. They went through a long process until they found a preferred *dakwah* radio station. Some listeners of MTA FM interviewed in the *Silaturrahmi*<sup>11</sup> program confessed that it took one or two years for them to be able to accept what they had learned from *dakwah* radio.

I start with the story of Pak Gun (70 years old) which illustrates how a former *abangan* turned into a pious Muslim only after listening to *dakwah* radio and becoming a MTA member in 2008. Previously, he was an ardent seeker for *ngelmu* (Javanese mystic knowledge), wandering from one place to another and learning from one master to the next. He looked for God in the same way as syncretic Javanese do. He fasted for long periods like 40 days or 3 days without interruption and sleep was not strange to him. He used to live as a hermit, buried under the soil for fourteen days. He learned *ngelmu* from one of the grandchildren of Raden Ranggawarsita (d. 1873), a respected and renowned poet of the Surakarta Palace. With such spiritual exercises, he had reached a mystical power through which he was able to do extraordinary things. One day his friend and he made a spiritual journey to the volcanic Mount Merapi, in the northeastern border with Yogyakarta and Klaten. It took more than forty kilometers from Surakarta. Both went there on foot. On the way back, as he told, thanks to their high level of spiritual power, they took only one hour and half to reach Solo. With the power he had he was able to collect many kinds of amulets (*jimat*) such as *kris* or daggers. At the peak of his career, he served as traditional healer or magician (*dukun*) who had the mystical power to cure those who suffered from various kinds of diseases. However, he never did it for money. He helped others with sincerity. His first encounter with MTA started after he learned from his nephew about an interesting radio station that regularly aired religious programs. That was MTA

radio. Since then, he regularly tuned in this radio channel and he became more and more interested in it, as it corresponded with what he had long been searching. For him, listening to *dakwah* radio was a form of God's guidance (*hidayah*).

After having become an MTA member, he stopped his syncretic practices. Although he still believed in mystical powers, he considered the practices as not coming from Allah but from Satan who wants to mislead humans and lead them into the Hell. This belief is in contradiction to what Ahmad Sukino often teaches to MTA's members. For Sukino, all Javanese syncretic practices are false and do not exist in reality. In contrast, Pak Gun believes that invulnerability to the effects of weapons or knives, for instance, is a reality in Javanese society and not just false imagination. As an MTA member, he strongly tries to avoid any kind of disobedience to God (*ma'siyat*). So much so that in some ways he often restrained himself and his family from getting involved in *ma'siyat* activities. He refused to donate money for such performances as *wayangan* (shadow puppet performance). As a Muslim, he said, he is not allowed to help any kind of disobedience. However, he is willing to participate in positive activities such as *gotong royong* (mutual aid for the development of the village).

The story of Pak Gun is not the only one to confirm the changes that take place in the social structure of Muslim societies in Java. Most of the other listeners of MTA FM told us similar stories of how *abangan* people converted to being 'pious' santris. Many former *dukuns* (black magicians) came to MTA to hand in their talismans (*jimat*) only after listening to MTA FM. Here I have some examples. On 13 March 2013, an old man, Pak Hisyam Marsudi (86 years old), attended a *Jihad Pagi* session to submit a *primbon* (a mystical book well known in Java). Upon the submission of his *primbon*, he narrated his journey to find 'true' Islam. At a young age, he learned both black and white magic in order for him to become invulnerable to being cut by blades. He practiced

various local syncretic practices called *perdukunan* (sorcery) for a long time. In his testimony, he told some stories of how magic or mystical power actually worked. One of the reasons he became aware of the falsehood of mystical power was that he once got injured by his grass knife while working in the rice fields. The same happened to his son. For this reason, he was dissatisfied with the mystical power he had learned and practiced. His dissatisfaction urged him to learn about Islam. His religious awareness of the truth of Islam intensified up when he read Q. 20: 14, which reads, 'Verily, I am Allah: there is no god but I; so serve thou Me (only); and establish regular prayer for celebrating My praise'.<sup>12</sup>



A collection of talismans and charms in the MTA building. *Photo by the author.*

As seen Pak Hisyam Marsudi's story, the conversion of *abangan* to santri is symbolized by the submission of charms and any other talismans by listeners to Ahmad Sukino at every the end of a *Jihad Pagi* session. The collection of talismans, heirlooms and others are placed in the entrance of the hall of the MTA building. Displayed in a showcase, the members of the congregations,

male and female, are allowed to look at the collection and they understand why the collection is put there. It is to remind them of the danger of *shirk*, believing in anything other than Allah. The reminder reads: '*Jimat Penyesat Umat Merusak Aqidah Membawa Kepada Kemusyrikan*' (Amulets Leading Astray from the Ummah, Corrupt the Faith, and Take [the Ummah] to the Polytheism). By submitting the talismans to Ahmad Sukino on behalf of the MTA foundation, they asserted their entrance into a new world of *santri*. This was the result of God's guidance (*hidayah*) given to whomever He will. What might be important to note from these stories is the intense use of specific words such as *ngelmu*, *dukun*, and *jimati*, which index Javanese identity.

Most listeners of MTA FM acknowledged that they no longer followed local traditions and customs such as *bancaan* (ritual meals) or *sesaji* (offerings), *bersih desa* (village purifications) and other *rites de passage*. Moreover, they also did not perform Islamic traditions like *tahlilan* and *slametan*, which they considered to have no textual basis, either from the Qur'an or from the Sunnah. These traditions have no '*tuntunan*' (God's guideline) as most of them would often express. Maqtubi, 73 years old, who attended the *Jihad Pagi* on 13 March 2013, illustrated these traditions as follows, 'According to my father, (Islam is about) going on the *haji* (pilgrimage to Mecca), visiting shrines, *unggah-unggahan* (marriage offerings), and *sedekah bumi* (village purification) ... It turned out that after I learned from the Qur'an, these (traditions) do not exist (in the Qur'an)...'<sup>13</sup> Afifuddin, a listener from Tuban in East Java, expressed his feeling about listening to MTA FM as follows: 'I was amazed, since up till now and for a long time my religious devotion could be considered to disagree with *tuntunan*, and should only be seen as to follow blindly (*cuma ikut-ikutan*). Then I listened to this radio (channel) and my heart felt calmed. I was very determined to hear more *tausiyah* (religious admonitions) that accord with the valid *tuntunan*'.

As I said earlier, searching for authentic Islam based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah was one attempt people made to distance themselves from *abangan* traditions. Consequently, they rejected or became unconvinced with everything that did not explicitly refer to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. An aged woman (76 years old) from Kroya, Cilacap, Central Java, for instance, came to Surakarta to attend a *Jihad Pagi* session.<sup>14</sup> Interviewed by MTA FM, she acknowledged that she had long been looking for a radio station that only broadcasted about the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Actually, MTA FM is not the only one to air Islamic programs 'based on the Qur'an and Sunnah'. A similar story is that of Mbah Abidin (some 80 years old). He comes from South Sumatra, but he is originally from Banyumas, Central Java. He learned about MTA FM first from his neighbors. He then asked his grand child to switch on his parabola television and to find the MTA FM channel. He had apparently become interested in MTA FM. In 2012, he had the opportunity to travel to Java to visit his son-in-law in Wonogiri, Central Java. Before reaching Wonogiri, he visited Rodja Radio (in Bogor), and then he attended a *daurah* (circle study or workshop) held by Salafis in Bantul, Yogyakarta. On 8 July 2012, he attended a *Jihad Pagi* session where I had the opportunity to communicate with him after the session had ended. I asked him about the way he had eventually become interested in MTA. He told me that one day he listened to MTA FM which aired a VCD recorded *pengajian* in which some cases were being discussed with which MTA disagreed, including the circulation of VCD sermons by K.H. Marzuki Mustamar from Malang and Habib Yahya. As shown in the VCD, the *Habib* stated that Islam should be understood not directly from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Instead, he encouraged Muslims to understand the Qur'an and the Sunnah through the lens of *fiqh* (Islamic law) as taught by *fuqaha'* (Muslim jurists).<sup>15</sup> Mbah Abidin disagreed with this statement, as, for him, understanding Islam should be based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Mbah Abidin's disagreement encouraged him to know more about

MTA. He became more interested in Islamic movements of which the main mission was to bring Islam back to its main sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah, like MTA.

The phenomenon of becoming born-again Muslims can also be seen among listeners of other radio stations. One example is the story of a female listener, Ibu Farida (45 years old).<sup>16</sup> She told me how she became a practicing Muslim after actively listening to Al-Madinah FM, a Salafi radio station. She is not Javanese, but Jakartanese or Betawi. Although born into a Muslim family, she was not that religious as she herself acknowledged. She did not know true Islam. She married a Javanese from Boyolali, Central Java. She and her husband moved to Boyolali eight years ago. She described that her family and the surroundings in Boyolali are replete with traditional practices, like visiting *dukun* (traditional healer), doing *slametan* and others. Since she started to listen to Al-Madinah FM, she felt 'falling in love' (*jatuh hati*) with it. She found a new way of life, true Islam. She was convinced that Allah's *hidayah* (guidance) came to her through *dakwah* radio. I was struck by the fact that after the interview she asked me about the Islamic ruling on participation in election. She told me that a friend of her came to ask her to vote for the PKS (Prosperity and Justice Party), an Islamic party. She asked me what she had to do, since after listening to Al-Madinah FM she knew that democracy was not an Islamic teaching. She said, '*pas denger demokrasi itu cara-cara orang kafir, jadi saya nggak ini, nggak tertarik ...*' (After knowing that democracy is the way of unbelievers, I am no longer interested [to participate in election]).

## 5.2. *Becoming Muslims*

Some listeners of MTA FM are former non-Muslims. They acknowledged that *dakwah* radio led them to become Muslims. Here I present two examples. On 23 March 2013, Pak Ranu from Gunungkidul, Yogyakarta attended a *Jihad Pagi* session. He was



previously a Catholic. As he testified, his family still adhered to Catholicism. He told me that his wife's family was not happy with his conversion to Islam. He came to the *Jihad Pagi* in the hope that he could unify his family within the same faith, Islam. He did not explain when he started becoming a Muslim. He had listened to *Jihad Pagi* on MTA FM for one year until he had the opportunity to attend a *Jihad Pagi* session in Surakarta. He said that upon listening, he felt as if he was called upon (by Allah) to unify his family within Islam. Explaining why he became interested in MTA, he said, 'Because [after] I considered and I learned about religious paths there is a parallelism between Islam as offered by MTA and non-Islam, especially the one I previously embraced. So, I believed that if that is so I received the call from Allah [to embrace Islam]'. It was not quite clear as to what he meant by parallelism. He did not give any idea on what the parallel between Islam and non-Islam looked like. However, we may assume that his conversion went through a certain process, which eventually led him to the conclusion that there was some parallelism between two religions.

Another example is about David Herlin, a listener from Pacitan, East Java. On 25 November 2012, he came to a *Jihad Pagi* session.<sup>17</sup> He had the opportunity to ask questions directly to Ahmad Sukino. He was crying when started to tell the story of his conversion to Islam. He became a *mu'allaf* (convert), three days before he came to the *Jihad Pagi*. His two children had embraced Islam earlier. His wife, who was still a Christian, did not know about his conversion to Islam until she learned of his intention to visit MTA. His listening to MTA FM resulted in his interest in Islam. He had listened to MTA FM for about one year when he decided to convert to Islam. 'Owing to Radio [MTA] FM I listened to, I became melted (*mencair*) by the words of *Pak Ustadh* to the extent that [now] I can gather together here with my brothers and sisters in faith ...' he confessed. He listened to MTA FM intensely



so that he became more knowledgeable about Islam. He learned from MTA FM, among other things, that if a Muslim dared to tell a lie once, he would make other lies. This lesson encouraged him to tell his wife the truth about his conversion to Islam. In this session, he asked Ahmad Sukino about, among other things, how to behave toward his wife who still could not accept his decision to become a Muslim.

## 6 Defending Islamic traditions

The wave of purification encouraged by some *dakwah* radio stations has triggered other social segments of Muslim society commonly called traditionalist Muslims to use radio as a self-defense medium and to use it for counter-criticism. Traditionalist Muslims form the majority of Muslims in Indonesia as represented by the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the largest Muslim organization in the country. They have become target of criticism by former *abangan*, modernist conservatives, as well as Salafi groups for being tolerant towards syncretic local practices. Moreover, they even questioned their Islamic practices such as the recitation of the *salawat*. These practices are considered as denigrating the ‘true’ teachings of Islam as prescribed in the Qur’an and the Sunnah. This criticism has forced traditionalist Muslims to engage actively in various media to defend their religious practices and views. In Surakarta, radio is one such medium of self-defense. A number of *dakwah* radio stations have been established in order to fortress the teaching of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama’ah*, including Al-Hidayah FM, RWS FM, Assunnah FM, and Radio Bani Adam (RBA) FM. These radio stations share in the common platform of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama’ah* and are culturally linked with the NU.

Some figures of these radio stations clearly stated that their aim was to defend their *‘aqidah* (Islamic faith) based on the

teachings of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. This was because of the flourishing of *dakwah* radio that aired information on the matters of Islamic faith that differed from what they believed is true. Syafii of Assunnah FM, for instance, said the following: 'We do not challenge [them], but we fortress [our faith]'.<sup>18</sup> The harsh criticism also triggered the establishment of Al-Hidayah FM in 2009. NU-inspired *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta can be said to have established their networks with the *dakwah* movement organized by *pesantrens* and *majlis taklims*. The networks have been translated into radio programs they regularly air. Moreover, they are active in public events such as public recitation of *salawat* and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah). In this regard, two *majlis taklim* need to be mentioned, Majlis Taklim Ar-Raudhah and Majlis Taklim Ahbabul Musthofa, both headed by Muslim preachers of Hadrami descent, Habib Novel bin al-Aydrus and Habib Syech Abdul Qadir Assegaf respectively. The prominence of these two key figures in regard to *dakwah* radio cannot be neglected. Habib Novel's sermons and Habib Syech's recorded *salawat* recitation are aired regularly by Al-Hidayah FM, and have become the most favorite programs. The off-air and on-air programs of NU-inspired radio stations are very much influenced by these figures. Other important *majlis taklims* are Majlis Alhidayah which is the umbrella organization of Al-Hidayah FM and Jamuro (*Jamaah Muji Rosul*, Congregation for Praising the Prophet). The *pengajians* these *majlis taklims* organized are central to Al-Hidayah FM. Off-air events of *pengajian* give us a clear picture of how its listeners express their Muslim identity as followers of the *Ahlus sunnah wal jamaah* and their connections with certain *majlis taklims*.

One of the manifestations of criticism of traditionalists is delegitimization of the authority of *kyai* or '*ulama*'. For their critics, Islam should be understood solely based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, not on the opinions of *ulamas* or *kyais*. In the words of Ahmad Sukino, understanding Islam should not be

through a '*makelar*' (Dutch: *makelaar*, 'intermediary', 'broker'). Many listeners of 'puritan' radio stations such as MTA FM equate *kyais* in the sense of *ulamas* or Muslim scholar with that in the sense of Javanese *Kris* or *dukun*. On one hand, this reflects their past intimacy with the *kyai* world in the second sense. On the other hand, it undermines the long established authority of '*ulama*' in favor of direct reference to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In response to this, a kind of movement has emerged called *Yuk Kembali kepada Ulama* (Let us return to the '*ulama*'). Recently, a special website called *kyaijawab.com* was launched, directed by Habib Novel Al-Aydrus. This site aims to answer Muslims' questions about how to live their daily lives in accordance with Islamic teachings. Al-Aydrus explained that all questions would be answered by referencing to works written by '*ulama*'.<sup>19</sup> In attempts to restore the doctrine of *Ahlus sunnah wal jamaah*, Al-Hidayah FM and its networks regularly organize *pengajians* in which the identity and ideology of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* are intensively discussed. One example is the *pengajian* entitled *Pengajian Dzikir dan Shalawatan Majelis Taklim Al Hidayah* I attended on 28 September 2012. It featured a *habib* (descent of the Prophet Muhammad). In his sermon he explained the legal position of chanting *dhikr* and *salawat* in public, which, for puritans, are considered *bid'ah*. He showed the textual bases of the practice to ensure his audiences that the practice was not *bid'ah*. Interestingly, while criticizing the adversaries of public *dhikr* and *salawat* practices, he quoted a story of the *Walisongo*. According to him, all these saints were descents of the Prophet Muhammad who succeeded in Islamizing the Javanese because they used local culture in their *dakwah* to attract them to convert to Islam. He then traced their genealogical ties to the Prophet to prove that the Islam the *Walisongo* disseminated throughout Java was that of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* which is authentic because of its original connectedness with the Prophet. By

offering this historical evidence, the *habib* wanted to show not only past example of the practices but also why the *dakwah* method of the *Walisongo* was successful. Moreover, this story is very important, since it is related to how an Islamic identity—in this regard Javanese Muslim identity—was constructed. This identity construction was clearly rendered into Al-Hidayah FM's Islamic broadcasting programs such as *salawat* songs. Much criticism of this kind of Sufi practices can be heard from *dakwah* radio stations every day.

It should be noted that although *dakwah* radio stations like Al-Hidayah FM are ideologically linked to the NU and *pesantren* communities, most of their listeners are lay Muslims. Therefore, we cannot equate them with students of *pesantrens* (called *santri*) whose knowledge of Islam is more advanced. Here, it is interesting to know how they dealt with *dakwah* radio and how they related it to their religious life. I have two examples.

The first example is Bunda Minuk (42 years old) whom I visited on 27 February 2014. She is a graduate of a senior high school (SMA). She has the radio turned on all the day long. She is an active listener of Al-Hidayah FM. She is a member of Permora Al-Hidayah, a group that listens to Al-Hidayah FM. Although she sometimes listened to other radio stations, Al-Hidayah FM was her favorite. For her, it is irreplaceable. It provides everything she needs ranging from entertainment to Islamic knowledge and spirituality. She acknowledged that she had *awam* (poor) religious knowledge. By listening to *dakwah* radio, she could learn about Islam, especially when attending a *majlis taklim* was impossible. Like a teacher, *dakwah* radio provided her with information about the Islamic practices she had to implement in her life. She testified that she very rarely read Islamic books. She learned about Islam only from attending *majlis taklim* and listening to *dakwah* radio. She also said that since she was little, she learned about Islam from her parents only in the forms of the NU and

the Muhammadiyah. She was never interested to know anything else. She never listened to a non-NU-inspired radio station. She said,

‘I do not want to hear about other ‘Islams’. I do not care [about them]. Since my birth, I learned from my parents that Islam is only NU and Muhammadiyah. That is it. If there are any other Islams, I do not care to know. ... it is only the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama‘ah* I like.



A radio set hanging on Abah Najab's house door. *Photo by the author.*

The second example is Abah Najab (45 years old) whom I visited on 2 April 2014. He only went to school as far as elementary education (SD). He learned about Islam informally in the mosques in his village. When he was 17 years old, he went to Jakarta to work until 2002 when he returned to his village. In Jakarta, he also often attended *pengajians* in mosques. Entering the front yard of his house, I was intrigued by a radio receiver hanging on the right side of the door. I heard from the radio receiver that a *salawat* song

was being aired by Al-Hidayah FM. Upon entering the guest room, I was again surprised by the pictures of Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani, the founder of Qadiriyyah Sufi Order, and Arab personalities, called *habibs*, like Habib Novel, Habib Luthfi, and others, hanging on the walls. These are enough to prove that Abah Najab is a keen listener to Al-Hidayah FM. *Salawat* songs are among the important programs of this radio station, and the *habibs* are among the important personalities behind its Islamic programs.

Like Bunda Minuk, Abah Najab also listened to other NU-inspired radio stations like Assunnah FM and Pitutur Luhur FM. However, Al-Hidayah FM for him is unchangeable. He make friends with listeners of Al-Hidayah FM. As he acknowledged, the radio is turned on all day long. ‘*Pantheng*’, he said in Javanese, which means that he always turned on the radio. He is very familiar with Al-Hidayah FM’s Islamic programs. However, his most favorite program is *salawat* song. Besides, he is very interested in the program of the recitation of the Sufi book *Al-Hikam*.<sup>20</sup> He said that this program invited listeners to remember the death. Surprisingly, when asked about the *fiqh* program, he said, ‘*fiqh kulo mboten ... patek ... saged ... taqlid mawon kulo niku, pengikut...* ([I] do not really understand *fiqh* ... [i] only *taqlid* [follow the ‘*ulama*’], [I am] a follower’. Like Bunda Minuk, he never listened to non-NU-inspired radio stations. He said that he was anti-MTA radio.

From these examples, we may conclude that for lay listeners, NU-inspired radio stations played a role in bringing them closer to the Islamic understanding of the NU. Like former MTA FM *abangan* listeners, they also felt they found the true Islam but from another perspective than that of MTA.

## 7 Concluding remarks

I have described how *dakwah* radio penetrated deeply into the

religious life of Muslims in Surakarta. The listeners of *dakwah* radio consist of the members of the institutions with which the radio stations are affiliated, and their sympathizers. They listened to *dakwah* radio at home and in their working places. Their salient influence resulted in changes in socio-religious structures, from *abangan* to *santri*, from non-Muslim to Muslim. The emergence of *dakwah* radio stations stimulated Muslims to participate in hot discussions on Islamic issues in society like polygamy and bribing. As can be seen from the examples above, some listeners of MTA FM related that they came from the *abangan* group, and some others from non-Muslim backgrounds. Not only listeners to MTA FM, some listeners to other radio stations with puritan orientations like Salafi ones come from similar backgrounds. The increasing commitment to Islam has been accompanied with enduring attacks on Islamic local traditions. This can be clearly found in the testimonies of MTA FM listeners on abandoning such rituals as *slametan* and *tahlilan*. This has triggered the proponents of these Islamic local traditions to establish their own *dakwah* radio stations. Al-Hidayah FM, one of these stations, actively aired Islamic programs related to those Islamic rituals. Listeners to Al-Hidayah FM, coming from various backgrounds, reacted to puritan movements like those mobilized by MTA.

From the description above, two streams of Islamic movements clearly influenced *dakwah* radio listeners in Surakarta. One stream is concerned with purifying Islam from Islamic local traditions, and the other with the preservation of those traditions. In the following chapters, I will investigate how the contestation between these streams occurred not by looking at listeners but at radio preachers. Before doing this, in chapter three, I will elaborate on the institutions and other driving forces behind *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta that eventually led to this contestation.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> In English, the word *Pak* is commonly translated 'Mister' (Mr.), but 'Mister' refers to the man with whom we are not quite intimate. The word *Pak* here connotes the intimacy of a father and his children.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Dian Nafi', Surakarta, 8 September 2012.
- <sup>3</sup> Interview with Sholehcan MC, Surakarta, 30 September 2012.
- <sup>4</sup> YATAIN is the abbreviation of Yayasan Tauhid Indonesia (Foundation of Indonesian Islamic Monotheism).
- <sup>5</sup> In Surakarta and neighboring areas, *warung hik* has become a vital small economic sector. Similar *warung* called *kucingan* can be found in Yogyakarta.
- <sup>6</sup> Habermas (1964: 52) defines it as 'the sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body'.
- <sup>7</sup> Literally, *nikah sirri* in Arabic means 'secret marriage'. However, in the Indonesian usage, it refers to the marriage that is held based on the Islamic rule, but it is not registered by the state.
- <sup>8</sup> *Pilkades* is the abbreviation of *Pemilihan Kepala Desa* (Village Head Election). It is common in such elections that candidates give money to their prospective voters. On *Pilkada*, see Kammen 2003: 303-329.
- <sup>9</sup> <http://regional.kompas.com/read/2013/03/08/1210469/Aktivis.Perempuan.Demo.Tolak.Poligami.dan.Nikah.Siri> (accessed 16 May 2013).
- <sup>10</sup> <http://suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/cetak/2010/02/22/99805/Larangan-Nikah-Siri-untuk-Masa-Depan-Keluarga> (accessed 29 April 2013).
- <sup>11</sup> *Silaturrahmi* is from Arabic *silat al-rahm*, meaning making friendship. The *Silaturrahmi* program presents testimonies of listeners regarding their experiences of listening to MTA FM.
- <sup>12</sup> Unless otherwise stated, all English translations of Quranic verses refer to Ali 2001.
- <sup>13</sup> From Maqtubi's statement, we can see his misunderstanding, since he mixed the *haji*, which is mentioned in the Qur'an with other practices, which are not included in the Qur'an. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bYKH35hXNc> (accessed 2 April 2013).
- <sup>14</sup> <http://mtafm.com/v1/archives/4170> (accessed 2 April 2013).
- <sup>15</sup> I will return to these cases in chapter four.
- <sup>16</sup> Personal communication by phone with Ibu Farida, 28 March 2014.
- <sup>17</sup> The video of the session can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fsbafcNPPi8> (accessed 13 May 2015).
- <sup>18</sup> Personal communication with Syafii of Assunnah FM, Boyolali, 9 December 2012.
- <sup>19</sup> [www.kyaijawab.com](http://www.kyaijawab.com). See also <http://www.solopos.com/2013/04/07/website-kyai-jawab-bakal-dilaunching-di-masjid-agung-394459> (accessed 24 April 2013).
- <sup>20</sup> *Al-Hikam* is a Sufi text written by Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Sakandari (or al-Iskandari) (d. 1309).





## CHAPTER THREE

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# POLITICS OF *DAKWAH* RADIO

## 1 Introduction

In chapter one, I mentioned competition among *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta. I underlined there that this competition was about religious authority. This is not to say that religious orientations and thoughts are the only factors behind this competition. They are only few among many factors. The present chapter deals with some of these factors. Networking, ideologies and State intervention are among the crucial factors in the competition. This chapter is also to understand how power relations played a role in the competition. According to Foucault (1982: 780), power relations take ‘forms of resistance against different forms of power’. Therefore, it is important to discuss these forms of resistance. Here attention is given to the way *dakwah* radio stations interact with each other and with other institutions and how this interaction has played a role in gaining power and domination over others.

In the sections that follow, I discuss the backgrounds of *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta. Then I explain their position in the

current development of Islam in Indonesia. Furthermore, I explore the institutions, Islamic orientations, and Islamic discourses that are predominantly aired in Islamic programs. Finally yet importantly, I specifically dwell on the attempts one *dakwah* radio station, MTA FM, made to gain public and legal recognition. By using MTA FM as an example, I aim to demonstrate that for a *dakwah* radio station power relations matter. This chapter aims to answer the following questions: What factors played a significant role in competition, and how has one *dakwah* radio station exploited its resources in order to assume power and domination?

## **2 *Dakwah* radio in changing Indonesian Islam**

Indonesian Islam cannot be pictured in a monolithic manner. One has to be mindful of the diversity of interpretations, aspirations, and trajectories Muslims in Indonesia have set up in order to understand their religion. Therefore, the picture of Indonesian Islam is never as stable as one might imagine. The face of Islam in Indonesia has been subject to change most of the time. Before the *Reformasi* era that started in 1998, Indonesian Islam was portrayed as moderate<sup>1</sup> as represented by the two largest Muslim organizations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Both organizations have long been known as modernist or reformist and traditionalist. Both have been considered as mainstream Indonesian Islam (Burhanudin 2007: 11-50). However, after the *Reformasi* started, Islam can no longer be described in a simple way. The division between traditionalists and modernists as some scholars once made (see, for instance, Noer 1978; Benda 1958) no longer suffices to understand the current complexity of Islam and Muslims in Indonesia. The emergence of various Islamic movements such as the Liberal Network of Islam (JIL), Salafi groups, and other transnational movements has made the picture more complex. The rise of new political parties with Islamic platforms such as PK (Justice Party), which transformed into

PKS (Justice and Prosperity Party), PBB (Crescent Moon Party), PKNU (National Ulama Awakening Party), and others contribute to the complexity to the extent that new categorizations beyond modernist and traditionalist were needed. Within modernist and traditionalist organizations, for instance, we can find streams of thought and factions that cannot be grasped simply through the lens of the modern and traditional dichotomy. Within the NU and the Muhammadiyah, there are both liberal and conservative factions that have colored the dynamics of the organizations.

In an introduction to their edited book, Imam Tolkhah and Neng Dara Affiah (2007) divide Islamic movements after the start of the *Reformasi* into three groups: radical Islam, Sufi Islam, and liberal Islam. The first group includes Islamist groups like Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (MMI), Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), and Front Pembela Islam (FPI). These movements occupy a salient presence in public and are able to penetrate into the grassroots in order to convince people that the only solution for Indonesia's current problems is the implementation of *shari'ah*. They not only demand the formal application of *shari'ah* but also often use violence as a medium for eradicating whatever they consider as violating *shari'ah* or a disobedience to God (*maksiat*). The second constitutes those movements that are more concerned with spiritual exercise, self-purification, and moral self-improvement, and avoid any involvement in practical politics. Examples of this kind are the movements initiated by Abdullah Gymnastiar (better known as Aa Gym) and Muhammad Ilham Arifin. They developed some Sufi practices without any attachment to a particular Sufi order (*tarekat*). The participants are mostly urban people, either from the low or middle-upper classes. In the third group are Islamic movements that try to reinvigorate Islamic thought through the reinterpretation and contextualization of Islam. Advocates of these movements include Liberal Islam Network (JIL), Islam Emansipatoris (Emancipatory Islam) and Islamic

Network of Muhammadiyah Youth (JIMM) (Imam Tolkhah and Neng Dara Affiah 2007: 10-19). As can be seen, these groups have different agendas and trajectories related to the interpretation of Islam. The differences often lead them to oppose each other. However, the attempts of all of them revolve around the issue of providing Muslims with the possible authoritative interpretations of Islam within the specific context of Indonesia. The question of what it means to be Muslims in Indonesia has become the guiding question for them to relocate Islam in Indonesia's contemporary life.

Islam in Indonesia has long been described as moderate Islam (Ali 2007: 202-240). However, the downfall of Soeharto's New Order regime in 1998 had led to a dramatic change in the appearance and perception of Muslims and Islam. This was the period when Islam in Indonesia presented violence and intolerance as shown in such cases as interreligious conflicts in Ambon and other regions, bomb attacks in various regions, attacks on Ahmadiyah followers and others. Previously depicted as tolerant and moderate, Islam in Indonesia now witnessed what Martin van Bruinessen has termed a 'conservative turn' which has been taken place since 2005, marked by such things as the issuance of the *fatwa* of the MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulama) which declared secularism, pluralism and liberalism incompatible with Islam (Gillespie 2007: 202-242). In addition, conservative groups took the lead in both Muhammadiyah (Burhani 2007: 352-399; ZTF 2009) and NU (Asmani 2006). The salient presence of new transnational Islamic movements has contributed considerably to the change of Islam in Indonesia. This phenomenon challenged the central position of the Muhammadiyah and the NU as the main proponents of the tolerant and moderate face of Islam in Indonesia. Many observers (van Bruinessen 2011; Jamhari and Jahroni 2004; Jamhari 2003: 1-28) think that the fate of Islam in Indonesia will depend on the role of both organizations in maintaining religious tolerance and

moderation. Jamhari (2003: 25) says, 'As long as the two large organizations in Indonesia—NU and Muhammadiyah—are not disturbed, the radical movements can be contained'. He is also optimistic that 'these organizations will continue to play an important role in influencing and determining the development of Islam in Indonesia'. However, such optimism does not eradicate the fact that Islam in Indonesia has been witnessing changes, including a possible inclination toward conservatism. As stated by Ricklefs (2012: 341), the term 'moderate' has a limited analytical value.

After the New Order era, Islam has witnessed a reposition vis-à-vis the State. During the New Order, the State held a strong control over Islam. This was only made possible by the centralized power of the State. The case was different when decentralization took the hold during the *Reformasi* era. The political decentralization enabled religious groups to set up their religious agendas without fear for the intervention by the State. The decentralization led to the weakening of the State. Regarding this, Ricklefs (2012) pointed to the weak presidency of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) who was reluctant to take firm action against thuggish forms of religious activism. Ricklefs (2012: 260) stated further that SBY's regional autonomy policy facilitated Islamization and Islamist agendas in the local context.

The emergence of many new Muslim groups throughout Indonesia since the start of the *Reformasi* era was the result of political decentralization. In Surakarta, many radical groups emerged. They were actively involved in mobilizing street mass movements. They included Laskar Santri Hizbullah Sunan Bonang, Brigade Al-Ishlah, Gerakan Pemuda Ka'bah, Laskar Pemuda, Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta (FPIS), Brigade Hizbullah, Laskar Mujahidin Surakarta, Laskar Jundullah, Laskar Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah, and Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia (Indonesian United Action of Muslim Students,

KAMMI) of Surakarta (see Fananie, Sabardila and Purnanto 2002; Wildan 2013: 208). Some of them appeared shortly before and after the *Reformasi* era began. In principle, they consisted of *dakwah* activists who were eager to restore Islamic values in the daily lives of Muslims in Surakarta. In their eyes, Muslims in Surakarta indulged in moral decadence as indicated in the increase in the incidence of crime, gambling, prostitution, and others. They believed that the only way to remedy this decadence is by taking Muslims back to true Islam and by enforcing *shari'ah* in a total way (*kaffah*).

Surakarta cannot be framed only within the moderate stream based on the domination of the NU and the Muhammadiyah. Despite their long establishment, both the NU and the Muhammadiyah are, as Wildan (2009) has shown, not mainstream organizations in Surakarta. This can be recognized from the salient public presence of non-mainstream groups. They are even more appealing than the others in attracting public attention. For Dian Nafi', a local NU leader, Surakarta is like a stage where people, local or foreign, are allowed to perform. During a performance, 'Solonese [Surakartanese] people prefer to listen to knowledgeable people, not to imitate them but to think of'.<sup>2</sup> He seems to emphasize the fact that many Muslim groups or movements in Surakarta are the result of the free stage Surakartanese people provide to locals and foreigners. For Nafi', *dakwah* radio is just like a stage where people are free to watch and take whatever they consider useful for them.

As for *dakwah* radio in Surakarta, no radio station aspires to liberalism. However, this is also not to say that all of them are radical. The dichotomy between liberal and radical or liberal and fundamental Islam may be less useful for picturing the entire dynamism of *dakwah* radio in Surakarta. Instead, both contrasting stands regarding local traditions are apparently dominant. Some *dakwah* radio stations are concerned with the eradication of

syncretic, local traditions such as *sesaji* (offerings), *bersih desa* (village cleansing ritual), *tahlilan* (praying for the dead), and *slametan*. Others are accommodative toward local cultures and traditions as long as they do not contradict with the basic teachings of Islam.

What has also changed in Indonesian Islam is concerned with religious authority as a result especially of open access to mass higher education and communication technologies. This led to the fragmentation of religious authority.<sup>3</sup> The authority is not only in the hands of those trained in traditional Islamic education (*'ulama'*) but also in the hands of those trained in modern secular education.<sup>4</sup> The rapid change in modern communications technology accelerated this process of fragmentation marked by the emergence of new religious elites on the one hand, and the easy participation of Muslim commoners in religious discussions and debates, on the other. At the national level, we see a proliferation of celebrity Muslim preachers and teachers (*da'i* or *ustadh selebriti*)<sup>5</sup> and their public presence on national television stations. Although not trained specifically in Islamic disciplines, they manage to attract the attention of considerable audiences. Abdullah Gymnastiar, Muhammad Arifin Ilham, the late Jeffry al-Bukhari (d. 2013) (better known as Uje), Subki al-Bughuri, Muhammad Nur Maulana, and Sholeh Mahmud (better known as Ustadh Solmed) are among the celebrity Muslim preachers who succeed in combining entertainment with Islamic preaching. Rather than from their erudition in Islamic sciences, their religious authority has been molded much more from their rhetoric skills in mobilizing huge masses of Muslims. Their Islamic messages can reach audiences easily through the use of modern communications technologies as TV, the Internet, mobile phone, and others.

The combination of being Muslim preachers and at the same time entertainers has increased their wealth considerably. Given



this economic profit, people criticized them of using religion as a means of making money. They live a hedonistic life and their luxurious life style raised moral questions among many Muslims. Rumors have it that they set high tariffs for each of their performances.<sup>6</sup> The MUI criticized their performances on television as presenting themselves as entertainers and celebrities rather than as Muslim preachers.<sup>7</sup> Irrespective of this criticism, however, what is significant to note is the way they built their religious authority, which is made possible by communications media. Their religious authority intersects with their celebrity status and the media. These new dimensions contribute to the formation of their religious authority.

The celebrity culture goes hand in hand with the rise of new religious elites and authorities. A good example in Surakarta is the leader of MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-Quran), Ahmad Sukino. He was not trained in a *madrasah* or in a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) but he went to the faculty of Islamic education at the Islamic Higher College of Education of the Muhammadiyah in Surakarta. Before the establishment of MTA FM in 2007, he was not much known to the public outside Surakarta. His popularity increased in line with the popularity of MTA FM's *Jihad Pagi* program. Now he has become identical with MTA FM itself in terms of their popularity. Naming MTA FM boils down to naming Ahmad Sukino. Irrespective of his lack of erudition in Islamic sciences as criticized by his critics, his religious authority has become stronger. The other example is the director of Al-Hidayah FM, Soni Parsono. He is a rich local businessperson. He created Majlis Al-Hidayah together with other Muslim teachers. He became an *ustadh* (lit. teacher) and Muslim preacher only after the establishment of Majlis Al-Hidayah and he became increasingly popular by the Islamic sermons he delivered on radio. Like Ahmad Sukino and MTA FM, Al-Hidayah FM is nearly identical with Soni Parsono.

### 3 Institutions behind *dakwah* radio

*Dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta are relatively independent from media ownership on the national level. *Dakwah* radio stations are less tied with media conglomeration, since they exist as community radio stations which are by nature non-profit. Moreover, by being independent, they can make their own agendas in accordance with their own missions and objectives and national-scaled media conglomerates cannot imposed anything upon. National-scaled media ownership has been a salient phenomenon since the last decade of the New Order era, marked by the establishment of huge media companies which owned many kinds of media and media branches throughout the country. This phenomenon has resulted not only in ownership concentration but also in the homogenization of content (Suranto and Haryanto 2007: 29-32; and Sudibyo 2004: 179-186).

However, this is not to say that *dakwah* radio has no economic value. Few *dakwah* radio stations rely financially merely on voluntary donations of the members of their mother institutions. Others have turned into new commercial radios without losing their status as *dakwah* radio stations. MTA FM, for instance, is basically a community radio station. In 2009, it built (bought, to be precise) the commercial station called Persada FM in Sragen. The economic aspect can obviously be seen from the very dense airtime of advertisement of various commercial products played at every commercial break. Although administratively based in Sragen, Persada FM's studio is located in the same office as MTA FM's studio, which is in Semanggi, Surakarta. There is not much difference between MTA FM and Persada FM in terms of program, management and crews. The only difference is that administratively MTA FM is a community radio station, meaning that the coverage should not exceed two and half kilometers, while Persada FM is a commercial radio whose coverage is wider.

At least, there are two significant elements in the establishment of Persada FM: one is to reach wider audiences and the other is to have the right to draw commercial benefit from such things as advertisement and others. I will discuss MTA FM in detail later.

It should be noted in the first place that *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta sprung up as *radio komunitas* (community radio) and some of them grew into commercial radio stations. The legal status of community radio stations is regulated in governmental regulation of Indonesia (PP) no. 51 of 2005. In chapter I, no. 2 of the regulation, it is stated that a community broadcasting institution is a radio or television broadcasting institution established by a certain community, which is independent and non-commercial. Its aim is to serve the need of that community. Furthermore, no. 3 of the same chapter states that a 'community is a group of people living or inhabiting and interacting with each other in a certain area'. Referring to the regulation, we know that *dakwah* radio stations, as community radio broadcasting institutions, are in essence self-funded. According to the regulation, they are not allowed to draw commercial benefit from their broadcasting activities. Members of a radio community station have to pay for broadcasting activities. Nevertheless, only some of them are actually the owner(s) of a *dakwah* radio station. It also often happens that a rich man established and funded *dakwah* radio stations under the name of an institution like that of the *majlis taklim* that he led.

In the case of the community radio stations, it is important to discuss the institutions under which they operate, and who their owners are. As far as *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta are concerned, there are three important conventional institutions of *dakwah* and Islamic education such as *madrasah* and *pesantren*, *majlis taklim* and *masjid*. *Masjid* are the oldest Islamic institutions since they have existed since the era of the Prophet Muhammad. Besides places for worship, mosques are also venues where Islamic instruction takes place. They are closely related to

*halaqah*. In Indonesia, mosques can easily be identified along the lines of their Islamic ideologies and identities. We can find, for instance, NU-affiliated mosques and those of the Muhammadiyah ones or the LDII (Lembaga Dakwah Islam Indonesia, Indonesian Institute of Islamic *Dakwah*). Therefore, it is common to speak of 'Masjid NU', 'Masjid Muhammadiyah', 'Masjid LDII', and so forth. Apart from being recognizable because of their management, these mosques are identifiable because of minute differences. For example, reciting the *qunut* prayer during the dawn prayer (*subh*) or the collective praying (*doa bersama*) after obligatory prayers is only done in the NU-affiliated mosques and do not exist in non-NU ones.

During the *Reformasi* era, mosques have become a heated issue because of the frequent bomb accidents. They were suspected of being places where radical Muslims nurtured and spread radical ideologies. Research on this matter has revealed that many mosques in Surakarta were revealed to have become spots where underground groups were actively spreading radical ideologies (al-Makassary 2010). In addition, there has been an issue of mosque grabbing. In several regions, taking over the administration of mosques occurred. In Klaten, for instance, a Muhammadiyah-administrated mosque was taken over by PKS activists (Zuhri 2012; Ricklefs 2012: 369). They also grabbed NU-administrated mosques and other NU institutions.<sup>8</sup>

In Surakarta and surroundings, there is only one mosque directly related to *dakwah* radio, which is Radio Bani Adam (RBA) FM in Boyolali. It is located in the complex of Masjid Bani Adam and belongs to the Yayasan Bani Adam, which is basically a foundation that manages mosques in several places in Boyolali and Sragen. Islamic sermons held in mosques are one of the most important sources of radio stations. RDS FM, for instance, regularly broadcasts recorded sermons delivered at Masjid Istiqomah in Penumping, Surakarta. Another mosque linked to RDS FM is

Masjid Mujahidin, located in front of the RDS FM studio. Both Masjid Mujahidin and RDS FM have relations with the Al-'Abidin Foundation. Another mosque that needs to be mentioned is Masjid Istiqlal Sumber. Particularly during Ramadan, RDS FM regularly aired *pengajians* and *tarawih* prayers (prayer done shortly after evening prayer during Ramadan) in this mosque.<sup>9</sup> Al-Hidayah FM also benefits from the supply of religious sermons from *pengajians* conducted at mosques, especially from Masjid Al-Hidayah in Solo Baru, Masjid Jami' Assegaf and Masjid Ar-Riyadh.

The next institution, *pesantren*, is considered the oldest institution of Islamic learning in Java. It is believed to have existed since the era of the *Walisongo* in the 14th century when Islam was in the earliest stage of its introduction to Java.<sup>10</sup> A *pesantren* is a place where Islamic sciences are taught and learnt. Its leader is called *kyai* and its students *santri*. The books taught at *pesantren* are well known as *kitab kuning* (lit. yellowish books), which mostly contain texts from the medieval era (on *Kitab Kuning*, see Van Bruinessen 1990: 226-269). In general, *pesantren* can be divided into traditionalist and modernist. While traditionalist *pesantrens*, mostly affiliated with the NU, relay much on *kitab kuning* written in Arabic script, modernist *pesantrens* prefer to use *kitab putih* (lit. white books) written in Roman script in Indonesian (van Bruinessen 1990: 227). Many new versions of *pesantrens* have emerged since the start of the *Reformasi* era, organized by Salafi groups. These new versions often use the term *ma'had* to replace the term *pesantren*. Another new thing in this kind of *pesantrens* is that their leaders are called *ustadh* and their directors *mudir al-ma'had* instead of *kyai*. The differences between the new and the old forms of *pesantrens* underline the Arabic style of the new ones, which differs from the Javanese style of *pesantrens* of the older kind. It is some sort of Arabization just like other things like changes in fashion and dress. More importantly, they signal a new form of religious authority.

*Pesantrens* have become an important source of broadcasting for *dakwah* radio. Some *pesantrens* established radio stations. In East Java, there is a network of *dakwah* radio stations, based in Tulungagung. This is a rather wide network with branches in several regions outside Tulungagung such as Gresik, Ponorogo, Jombang, Madiun and Blitar.<sup>11</sup> The central *pesantren* with which Radio Madu FM is affiliated is Pondok Pesantren Madinatul Ulum, as reflected in the acronym of the name of the station.<sup>12</sup> In Surakarta, there are several *pesantren*-based *dakwah* radio stations, including Assunnah FM (Boyolali), RWS (Radio Wali Songo) FM (Sragen), Suara Quran FM (Sukoharjo) and Darussalah FM (Sukoharjo). The first two are culturally and ideologically affiliated with the NU, and the rest are Salafi-oriented. Religious sermons delivered in these *pesantren* have become one of the main sources for these radio stations. Assunnah FM is affiliated with Pondok Pesantren Jam'iyatul Qurro' Al-Futuhiyyah Assalafiyah in Andong, Boyolali. RWS FM belongs to Pondok Pesantren Wali Songo Sragen, led by the famous local preacher, Islamuddin Makruf.

*Pesantrens* play an important role in the network of *dakwah* radio. Al-Hidayah FM has clear connections with NU-affiliated *pesantrens*, including Pesantren Al-Qur'ani Mangkuyudan, Pesantren Al-Inshof Plesungan, Pesantren Darul Musthofa, and Pesantren Darul Qur'an. The significance of these *pesantrens* for Al-Hidayah FM can be seen from their leaders' involvement in *pengajians* organized by Majelis Al-Hidayah and aired on Al-Hidayah FM. In addition, they are advisors of both Majelis Al-Hidayah and Al-Hidayah FM. RDS FM has a link with Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, Ma'had Isykarima Karanganyar, Ma'had Ibnu Abbas Klaten, and Ma'had Darul Wahyain Magetan. The leaders of these *pesantren* and *ma'hads* are key figures in the management of radio stations and have decisive roles in their programming.

Salafi radio stations also have *pesantrens* or *ma'had* networks. Al-Madinah FM belongs to Ma'had Al-Madinah in Surakarta. Suara Quran FM is part of Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah Sukoharjo. Darussalaf FM belongs to Ma'had Darussalaf, also known as Ma'had Ibnu Taimiyah Sukoharjo. What is significant to note is that the network of Salafi radio stations corresponds with the network of their mother *pesantrens*. Since Salafis have been polarized into several groups, the networks of Salafi radio stations differ from one another.<sup>13</sup> Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah, for instance, does not belong to the same network as Ma'had Darussalaf.<sup>14</sup> Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah has a broad network that includes all the Salafi *pesantrens* within the network of Radio Rodja FM, based in Bogor, West Java. Among these *pesantrens* are Ma'had Al-Ghufron Gresik, East Java, Ma'had Riyadhul Jannah Bogor, Ma'had Takhassus 'Ulum Syar'iiyah Bogor, Ma'had Ibnu Abbas As Salafy Sragen, Pesantren Al-Irsyad Tengeran, Salatiga, and others. I will discuss the Salafi network specifically in chapter seven.

The last institution related to *dakwah* radio is *majlis taklim*, derived from Arabic *majlis al-ta'lim* (place of education, instruction). Although the term *majlis* refers to a place, it is used to name a session in which Islamic lectures and lessons are given. It also means a venue for a meeting or council for education. Its initial aim was instructional (Abaza 2004: 179). The emergence of *majlis taklim* in Indonesia is not a new phenomenon. It emerged in 1933 before Indonesia's Independence when a mosque called Al-Barkah was established in Balimatraman, Jakarta and it belonged to Perguruan As-Syafi'iyah. The mosque had two *majlis taklims*, one for women and one for men. At the time, the *majlis taklim* for women was held every Saturday, while that for men was organized on Wednesday night and Sunday morning. In 1958, Tuty Alawiyah, a renowned female preacher and the daughter of the founder of As-Syafi'iyah, Abdullah Syafi'i (d. 1985), was entrusted to organize Majelis Taklim Kaum Ibu (MTKI), a *majlis taklim* especially for mothers.<sup>15</sup>

*Majlis taklims* play an important role in Surakarta as it does in other regions. There are no data about the number of *majlis taklims* in Surakarta. However, the pervasiveness of *majlis taklim* in the region is beyond doubt. We can find it everywhere in kampongs as well as in cities. Among them are Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (MTA), Majlis Taklim Gumuk, Majlis Taklim Jamaah Penumping, Majlis Taklim Jamaah Pelaksana Tabligh (Mulyadi, Soedarmono, et al. 1999: 153), Majlis Taklim Jamuro, Majlis Al-Hidayah, Majlis Taklim Ahbabul Musthofa, Majlis Ilmu dan Dzikir Ar-Raudhoh, and others. What is important to note is the fact that *majlis taklims* provides Muslims with free Islamic education. It is massively organized so that it can attract many people to attend. Thus, *majlis taklims* in Surakarta are accessible to people beyond their different social classes. These easily accessible *majlis taklims* differ from those organized for elite or middle-upper class Muslims which can easily be found in big cities like Jakarta (Abaza 2004: 173-202). With the rise of what Julia D. Howell has called 'urban Sufism', *majlis taklim* play an important role for conducting *pengajian* among urban elites (Howell 2007: 22-23).

*Masjid*, *pesantren* and *majlis taklim* have long historical roots in the Muslim world. These institutions have long been rooted in societies and they have played critical roles in *dakwah* activities and Islamic education.<sup>16</sup> Through radio, the *dakwah* activities of these institutions have become widespread among and accessible to wider audiences. In addition to them, both individuals and corporations have also played important roles in establishing *dakwah* radio stations. The fact that most *dakwah* radio stations are linked with conventional Islamic institutions demonstrates that they are extensions of these institutions. Therefore, it may be said that *dakwah* radio, despite being modern, can be considered as a continuation of older *dakwah* institutions such as *pesantren*, *majlis taklim* and *masjid*.



## 4 On-Air Islamic discourses

As far as I am concerned, Islamic discourses broadcast on *dakwah* radio revolve around various themes that reflect their ideologies, religious identities and aspirations. Thus, to uncover their ideologies, it is important to discuss the themes and their ideological significance. In this section I will focus on three themes: *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* (followers of the Sunnah and the Islamic community) and return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah; purification and indigenization; and application of *shari'ah*. This is not to say that Islamic discourses aired on *dakwah* radio are limited to these themes. Many other themes can be explored and I only present four of them, as they have direct relations with *dakwah* radio's ideological aspects.

### 4.1 *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*

The question of what Islam should be is central to *dakwah* radio in Surakarta. This is the main theme and this can clearly be seen from the attempts *dakwah* radio stations have made to interpret Islam. The *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* and 'back to the Qur'an and the Sunnah' should not be placed in opposition to each other. It cannot be said that the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* oppose the return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The difference between the followers of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* and those of 'going back to the Qur'an and the Sunnah' lies in their respective interpretations of Islam. Some claim to be followers of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, while others insist that Islam be based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, the only valid sources of Islamic teachings. Some follow the understanding of Islam based on one of the *madhhabs*. For them, it is crucial to follow both the method used by and the products of *madhhab* to understand Islam rather than directly going back to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. In contrast to this, others argue that Muslims should not blindly follow a *madhhab* or any other religious authorities other than the

Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet. Some advocates of this tend to appeal to *ijtihad* (independent reasoning), while others like MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an) do not.

Nevertheless, *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* itself is a concept some Muslim groups contest. Generally speaking, the concept refers to Sunnism as opposed to Shi'ism. The NU is the only organization to overtly declare the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* as its ideological foundation. It has systematized the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* concept as follows: in terms of Islamic law, it follows one of the four *madhhab*s (the Maliki, the Hanafi, the Shafi'i, and the Hanbali); in terms of Islamic theological doctrine, it embraces the teachings of Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari and al-Maturidi; and in terms of Islamic Sufism, it adheres to al-Ghazali and al-Junaid al-Baghdadi. It is thus apparent that the NU interprets the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* concept in accord with its adherence to the *madhhab* system of thought.<sup>17</sup>

Though declaring itself as a non-*madhhab* affiliated organization, the Muhammadiyah can still be considered to follow the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. At least, this was what Djarnawi Hadikusuma once insisted upon in response to critics of the Muhammadiyah's non-*madhhab* stance. Rather than confining itself to following a *madhhab*, the Muhammadiyah, as interpreted by Hadikusuma, understands the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* as including all Muslims who firmly follow God and the Prophet. Included in the scope of the concept are the Mu'tazilah.<sup>18</sup> Hadikusuma's view is not mainstream within the organization. Fauzan Saleh (2001: 79) argues that although this is not the Muhammadiyah's official opinion, it reflects the pluralism within the organization.

New contenders of the NU version of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* are Salafi groups who consider it as the only valid version of Islam. Salih al-Fauzan (2012: 14-15), one of the leading Salafi personalities, puts forward that there are two main distinct

characters of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*: 1) they take strong hold of the prophetic Sunnah; and 2) they are *ahl al-jama'ah* (people of the community), since they agree to strongly hold the Truth. From al-Fauzan, we cannot find a clear difference between the Salafi version and the NU version, since both sides agree on these two features of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. The clear contrast between the two is located in Salafis' rejection of the adherence to the theological schools of Abu Hasan al-Ash'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi, and of the Sufi school of al-Junaid al-Baghdadi and al-Ghazali.

Muslim groups other than the NU and Salafis also declare themselves as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. As a concept, it is at the core of Sunnism, which is contrasted to Shi'ism. None of the *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta adheres to Shi'ism. Rather, the anti-Shi'i movement has been increasing in this city. This can be seen in the case of Mudzakir, the leader of Ma'had Al-Islam in Gumuk, Surakarta. He is considered by some Muslim groups as having a *Shi'i* orientation. In 2013, a lecture was held at Masjid Istiqlal Surakarta, featuring Mudzakir. The title of the lecture was the excellence of *Ahl al-Sunnah* over the Shi'ism. Apparently, this became a trial to his Shi'i orientation, an orientation that he denied. In fact, after the lecture, he was forced to declare himself either a Sunni or a Shi'i follower. There are many reasons why the participants considered Mudzakir of having a Shi'i orientation. He was a former vice-director of YAPI (Foundation of Islamic Boarding School), a Shi'i school in Bangil, East Java. He once travelled to Iran. Moreover, during his lecture, he had refused to condemn Bashar Assad, the president of Syria, who is known as a Shi'i follower. According to many participants, Mudzakir's reluctance to condemn a Shi'i figure like Assad implied his support to the despotic regime in Syria controlled by the Shi'i.<sup>19</sup> No doubt, this local anti-Shi'ism is part of a larger anti-Shi'i movement that has increased since the collapse of the New Order.<sup>20</sup> MTA deserves

special attention, since it prefers to identify itself as following Islam *per se*. Islam cannot be attributed to appellations other than those mentioned in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Therefore, for MTA and MTA FM, there is no such thing as Javanese Islam or Indonesian Islam, as Islam is the Qur'an and the Sunnah as such. This unclear position of the MTA toward the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* often excludes MTA from mainstream Sunni Islam in Indonesia. In competition with other groups, like Salafis (and NU), for instance, this position of the MTA was always put into question.

#### 4.2 Purification and Indigenization

The second theme is purification and indigenization. Purification here refers to all attempts to shun away from and purify Islam from syncretic, mystical and magical practices, and local Hinduist-Buddhist beliefs.<sup>21</sup> The purification of religious practices has been the main mission of reformist and modernist movements such as the Muhammadiyah, Persis, and others. Purification and *ijtihad* (independent reasoning in Islam) are the main elements of the movements (Peacock 1978: 18). What is important to note is that the underlying assumption of purification is that there is one single Islam, which is universal and beyond mundane time and space. This version of Islam is authentic, since it is independent of any 'un-Islamic' externality. This theme is not novel. One of the reasons of the emergence of modernist movements in the archipelago in the beginning of the twentieth century was the spread of idiosyncratic practices among Muslims. The theme recurs all the time. In the context of *dakwah* radio, modernist as well as puritan Muslim radio stations such as Mentari FM (of the PKU Muhammadiyah Surakarta) for instance refuses to broadcast programs it considers *bid'ah* (despicable religious innovation) or *takhayyul* (delusion).

In the 1980s, the late Abdurrahman Wahid, the leader of the NU introduced the term *pribumisasi Islam* (indigenization of Islam) to

underscore the nature of Islam in Indonesia (Wahid 1989: 81-96). To explain this, Wahid emphasized the mutual relationship of Islam and culture. Both Islam and culture are different but altogether interrelated. For him, *pribumisasi Islam* should be considered in attempts to understand Islam within the Indonesian context rather than attempts to deny the fact that Islam and culture differ—the polarization of Islam and culture. Islam needs to be understood by taking contextual factors into consideration. Pribumisasi Islam is not a process of submitting Islam to the influence of Javanese culture or '*Jawanisasi*' (Javanization) or syncretism but it is based on the Islamic legal maxim (*usul al-fiqh*) which accepts that culture and tradition ('*adat*') as a valid sources of Islamic law (*al-'adat muhakkamah*). In his analysis of the thoughts of Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, Ahmad Baso (2006: 266: 311) makes a distinction between *Islamisasi* (Islamization) and *pribumisasi* (indigenization). He identifies the Islamic renewal project Nurcholish Madjid offered as *Islamisasi*, which is different from Abdurrahman Wahid's *pribumisasi* concept. For Baso, both *Islamisasi* and *pribumisasi* should be analyzed as forms of ideology rather than as scientific and objective descriptions of a reality. As an ideology, Madjid's version of *Islamisasi* implies the quest for 'pristine Islam' and its domination over other interpretations of Islam. According to Baso (2006: 286), the main idea of Wahid's *pribumisasi* is a cultural transformation (of Indonesian Muslim society), which is based on social ethics. Within this transformation, Islam is just one among many factors. In his words (Baso 2006: 297), Islam in the eyes of Wahid is a kind of 'public ethics' (*etika publik*) rather than a set of symbols and formal teachings.

Purification and indigenization feature prominently in the Islamic programs *dakwah* radio stations aired. Under this theme are such subthemes as *shirk* (polytheism) and *bid'ah* (forbidden religious innovation) which can easily be found on *dakwah* radio stations like MTA, Radio Suara Quran, Radio Al-Madinah, and

RDS FM. Put against a Javanese background, these subthemes display clear messages on the obligation for Muslims to purify their religious identity from the 'un-Islamic' elements of Javanese culture. One clear example is their stance toward the *grebeg maulud* tradition annually held in the palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta in Central Java and in Cirebon in West Java (On this, see for instance, Beck 1995: 261-284).<sup>22</sup> This tradition has become the object of severe criticism. For its opponents, it is a *bid'ah* that may lead to *shirk*. All in all, *tauhid* (Islamic monotheism) is the key concept which guides every programming decision.

In line with the discourses on purification and indigenization, the Sufi practices manifest in some broadcasting programs are contested. Sufism has become a significant identity marker of *dakwah* radio stations whose religious orientation and tradition are related to the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama). Most of NU's founding figures in Surakarta practiced Sufism and were followers of a *tarekat* (Sufi Order). Among them were K.H. Mansyur, a follower of the Tarekat Naqshabandiyah-Khalidiyah, K.H. Abdurrahim, a *murshid* (master) of the Tarekat Syadziliyah, K.H. Siraj and K.H. Salman, both *murshid* of the Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah-Khalidiyah.<sup>23</sup> Rather than uncompromisingly oppose local traditions, these figures took an accommodative stance as long as they did not obviously contradict the basic teaching of Islam (Aijuddin 2008: 474). Moreover, the presence of Salafi groups has contributed to intensifying the debates and in their sermons, publications and radio shows they actively criticize any Sufi practice as well as Javanese tradition. Critique to Sufism can also be heard on other puritan *dakwah* radio stations like RDS FM and MTA FM.

Important programs inspired by Sufi practices include the praise of the Prophet (*salawat* songs) and saint cults such as *manaqib* and *tahlil*. For puritan *dakwah* radio stations, such programs should not be aired since they contradict the true teachings of Islam. This critical stance is resonant with their criticism against popular

practices such as *sesaji* (offerings), *bersih desa* (village cleansing), *perdukunan* (magic), and the like. Their rejection of Sufi practices can also be seen in the case of their rejection of Islamic songs such as *nashid*. All Salafi *dakwah* radio stations consider them *haram* (religiously forbidden), while for MTA FM, only those that contain *du'a* (prayer) are *haram* (Sunarwoto 2013: 205-215). All this displays how Islam and Javanese identity are being contested and how radio has become one of the important tools in this contestation.

#### 4.3 Implementation of *shari'ah*

The last theme is concerned with the discourse on the enforcement of *shari'ah*, a theme dominant in Indonesia's political life after the collapse of the New Order era. The demand for the implementation of *shari'ah* has spread in several parts of the country since then. During the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) general meetings of 2000, 2001, and 2002, Islamic parties including PPP, PBB, and PK proposed the reinstallation of the 'Seven Words' or better known as the Jakarta Charter into the preamble of the Indonesian Constitution of 1945,<sup>24</sup> but they failed (Amal and Panggabean 2004: 62-62; Nasir 2007: 3-6). Radical organizations like Forum Komunikasi Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah (FKAWJ), Laskar Jihad, Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defender Front, FPI), and Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia (Council of Indonesia's Holy Fighters, MMI) rallied in their demand for the formal implementation of *shari'ah* and the reinstallation of the Jakarta Charter (Amal and Panggabean 2004: 71-81). In line with this, the demand for the implementation of *shari'ah* by-laws (*Perda Syariah*) in various regions and *shari'ah*-based regulations were enacted in such regions as Aceh, Bulukumba in Sulawesi, Tasikmalaya, Cianjur and elsewhere (Amal and Panggabean 2004: 82-97). In Surakarta, various elements of Muslims within AUIS (Alliance of Muslims of Surakarta) established on 5 December

2000, demanded the implementation of *shari'ah*. They consisted of some twenty-five task forces from political parties and vigilante groups (*laskar*) with more than a thousand members. They campaigned against *maksiat* (social deceases and immoral behavior) by 'sweeping' bars, discotheques, brothels and others (Amal and Panggabean 2004: 95-96; Fananie, Sabardila and Purnanto 2002: 36).

It should be noted that for Muslims, the problem is not the enforcement of *shari'ah* itself. All committed Muslims will absolutely agree on it, regardless of their different degrees of interpretations. Rather, it is the formalization of *shari'ah* that has triggered heated debates among Muslims and politicians. Formalization means to lift the *shari'ah* to the level of national law, meaning that the State has the right to intervene in public as well as private religious matters. Adopting Olivier Roy's (1994: 24-25) concept, Haedar Nashir differentiates 'Islamization from above' from 'Islamization from below' in analysing the current Muslim movements that demand the application of *shari'ah*. Nashir (2007: 282) uses the former to refer to the struggle of Muslims for the implementation of *shari'ah* in various regions such as South Sulawesi, Aceh and West Java. This is different from the demand for *shari'ah* by such Muslim organizations as MMI and HTI, which is the Islamization from above, since they consider that Islamization should be realized through State power (Nashir 2007: 388). According to me, Nashir has misunderstood Roy's distinction when applied within the Indonesian context. It is true that MMI and HTI aim to establish State power, either in the form of an Islamic State (in the case of MMI) or in the form of a *khilafah* (caliphate in the case of HTI). However, what they have done occurred outside the power structure of the existing State. This is different from the *shari'ah* by-laws proposed in various regions, which is in fact imposed by local State power, thus Islamization from above (see Salim 2004). Therefore, Nashir



puts the portrait upside down in identifying Islamization within the *shari'ah* discourse.

*Dakwah* radio stations' responses to the discourse on the implementation of *shari'ah* vary. This can be seen, as some examples, in the different stances of three radio stations, RDS FM, Al-Hidayah FM, and MTA FM. RDS FM can be considered the defender of the implementation of *shari'ah* at the State level. This can be seen from a number of things. The use of the word '*shari'ah*' in its name is a strong indication that RDS FM is in favor of the implementation of *shari'ah*. Its jingle reads: 'With *shari'ah*, life becomes more beautiful' (*Dengan syariah, hidup menjadi lebih indah*) which confirms the impression. In addition to Abidin Foundation, RDS FM has also to do with Masjid Mujahidin. On the left side of the Mujahidin's wall is a running text calling Muslims to implement the *shari'ah* in total and condemns democracy as a secular State system of *taghut* (despotism).<sup>25</sup> This is in line with the name of the *shari'ah* building (Gedung Syariah), located at the crossroad and side by side with the RDS FM studio. Recently, a special meeting was convened in the building to establish the Dewan Syariah Kota.<sup>26</sup> Suparno Zainal Abidin is one of the important figures behind its establishment. The appointed head of the board was Mu'inuddinillah, also one of the *shari'ah* board members of RDS FM.<sup>27</sup> *Shari'ah* is the spirit behind RDS FM's broadcasting programs. With its *shari'ah*-minded orientation, RDS FM is very critical of the State. This can be seen from, for instance, the *Assalamualaikum Indonesia* program aired every morning from 07.00 to 09.00. This is a news program in which national issues such as corruption and the economy are discussed from the perspective of *shari'ah*. As far as I am concerned, there is a strong inclination in this program to draw the attention of listeners to the conclusion that *shari'ah* is the only solution. This conclusion can easily be drawn from *pengajian* programs. Although it has never clearly stated demands for the establishment of an Islamic

State, RDS FM is very actively campaigning for the application of *shari'ah* in a State system. RDS FM supports the application of *Shari'ah* Regional Laws (Perda Syariah) as enacted in Aceh and some other regions in Indonesia.

Al-Hidayah FM (which belongs to Majelis Al-Hidayah) is not directly involved in the discourse on the implementation of *shari'ah* at the State level. However, this does not necessarily mean that it disagrees with the implementation of *shari'ah* at individual and social levels. What is dominant in Al-Hidayah is the significance of the implementation of Islam a la *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* within the Indonesian context. Habib Sholeh al-Jufri, one of the important personalities of this radio station, once stated that *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah ulama* were the founding fathers of Indonesia.<sup>28</sup> Seen from this line of thought, it can be said that for Al-Hidayah FM, *shari'ah* should be understood in accordance with the understanding of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. Majelis Al-Hidayah invited local governmental officials to its *pengajians*. It also often invited the head of the local police of Sukoharjo. According to an Al-Hidayah FM announcer,<sup>29</sup> this was done to participate in the effort to secure and save the people in the region. As an example, a newly appointed head of the local police was invited to a *pengajian* of Majelis Al-Hidayah, just to introduce himself to the Muslims in the region. This was considered an important event<sup>30</sup> because of the special position of Sukoharjo that had known various tragic moments. Sukoharjo in particular, and Surakarta in general, had attracted the attention of lots of people in Indonesia and abroad for the frequent terror attacks on police headquarters since the collapse of the New Order in 1998. Al-Hidayah FM is quite accommodative toward the State as is the NU. Representing the majority of Muslim Indonesians, Al-Hidayah FM is concerned with turning Islam into *rahmah li-l 'alamin* (a blessing for humankind) in the sense the NU interprets it.<sup>31</sup> Within this frame of thought, Al-Hidayah FM participated in

an event called ‘Sukoharjo Bersholawat dan Berdzikir’ organized by the local NU in Sukoharjo on 11 January 2013. The theme was ‘Menjaga NKRI bersama NU’, which means ‘Guarding the Unitary State of Republic of Indonesia together with the NU’. The theme demonstrates that like the NU, Al-Hidayah FM and Majelis Al-Hidayah are willing to be part of the national agendas rather than problematizing the foundation of the nation-State of Indonesia.

MTA agrees that *shari’ah* should be implemented in the lives of Muslims.<sup>32</sup> However, its implementation should start from individual Muslims and not from the State. For MTA, the implementation of *shari’ah* at the national level will be effective only if individual Muslims live according to the true Islamic teachings based on the Qur’an and the Sunnah. Otherwise, the discourse of the implementation of *shari’ah* will be pointless (cf. Ricklefs 2008a: 125). It can be said that MTA is inclined to support the enforcement of *shari’ah* ‘from below’. In other words, MTA clearly does not support the implementation of *shari’ah* at the level of the State. This can partly clarify why MTA is a pro-government organization. This stance has been vital in its attempts to gain legal recognition, as the following subsection will discuss.

## 5 Struggles for recognition: the MTA FM case

### 5.1 MTA and its MTA FM

Located in the Pasar Kliwon area, Surakarta, MTA emerged first as a forum for *pengajian* called Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur’an, led by Abdullah Thufail Saputra (d. 1992) who was a local merchant of Pakistani descent. He was a colleague of Abdullah Sungkar (d. 1999), the founder of Pesantren Al-Mukmin Ngruki, and Abdullah Marzuki (d. 1993), the founder of Pesantren Modern Assalam, both in Surakarta. At the time, these ‘three Abdullahs’, as one writer dubbed them, were prominent leaders of *dakwah* activists in the city. Together with Sungkar and Abu Bakar Baasyir, he established

an Islam-based radio station called *Radio Dakwah Islamiyah Surakarta* (Surakarta Radio for Islamic *Dakwah*, RADIS) in 1970. The radio station was banned by the New Order regime, since it was regarded politically subversive.<sup>33</sup>

As a foundation (*yayasan*), MTA was established on 19 September 1972 and gained legal recognition from the State in 1974. The main aim of the foundation is to summon Muslims back to the Qur'an with a specific emphasis on the understanding, instilling and practicing of Qur'anic teachings. MTA was not born in a vacuum. Its establishment was inseparable from the social conditions that surrounded it. As stated in the MTA website, in the 1960s and 1970s, Muslims were politically, economically, and culturally marginalized. Saputra viewed that this condition occurred because Muslims at that time were lacking in their knowledge of the teachings of the Qur'an. Saputra believed that this dire condition could only be overcome by returning to the Qur'an. Being concerned about this deteriorating condition, Saputra established the Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an Foundation (Council of Qur'anic Interpretation) in 1972.

After Saputra's death in 1992, the MTA leadership went over to Ahmad Sukino.<sup>34</sup> MTA holds the imamate system of leadership, which means that the appointed leader will chair his post until the end of his life (On this, see Jinan 2013). This also explains his highest authority within the organization, which affects all decisions the organization makes. As for MTA FM, Ahmad Sukino has a decisive role in setting up Islamic programs. For example, in its early broadcasting, MTA aired *salawat* music as was common among NU members. Hearing this, Sukino told the MTA FM crew to stop playing *salawat* songs as it was not in accordance with the right teaching of Islam.<sup>35</sup>

Under Ahmad Sukino's leadership, MTA has grown significantly. The foundation organized various activities ranging from Islamic gatherings, formal and non-formal education, economic

enterprises, health care, publishing (books and magazines), communication and information (radio station, TV station, and a website). In 2007, MTA had some 25 branches at the provincial level and more than 128 branches at the district level. The number of its members reached some 100,000 people from throughout the country (Wildan 2009: 88). Until 2008, it has run 134 schools in Java and elsewhere (see Ricklefs 2008: 125). Its public relations officer estimates that currently MTA has had more than 200 branches and representatives.<sup>36</sup> This includes representatives abroad such as in Korea, Japan, and China.

The transfer of leadership seemed to influence the ideological development of MTA which turned more textualist than ever in the sense that it tried to understand Islam only in accordance with its primary sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah without much reference to other Islamic sources. During Saputra's era, it seemed that MTA was very much influenced by modernist Muslim exegetes such as Muhammad 'Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935). Later, at present, Ahmad Sukino's strong hold on the Qur'an and the Sunnah has led to a situation where rarely or even never reference is made to other Islamic sources such as *fiqh* (Islamic law) or *sirah* (history of the Prophet).<sup>37</sup> In a *Jihad Pagi* session, Ahmad Sukino once said (in Javanese), *Nek Quran-mu karo Quran-ku podo, mesti unine podo* (If your Qur'an and my Qur'an are the same, the wording must be the same).<sup>38</sup> By this statement, he assumed that not only is the Qur'anic wording of various Qur'anic *mushaf* (Qur'anic book) the same but also the meaning and purport of the Qur'an is (or must be) exactly the same. This statement reflects the ideology of returning Muslims to the genuine teachings of the Qur'an. In this regard, MTA can be considered a modernist movement in the sense that it has no ties with any *madhhab* (see Ricklefs 2012: 514-5). At the same time, it is puritan, since it attempts to purify Islam from un-Islamic external elements.<sup>39</sup> Seen from these commonalities, MTA can be

categorized as aspiring to Islamic renewal and reform (Voll 1983). However, as stated above, it does not encourage *ijtihad* (see Jinan 2013: 275). Some writers and opponents categorize MTA as part of the Wahhabi movement (see Wahyudi 2009).

As a puritan movement, MTA fights local customs that were added to and regarded as Islamic rituals and festivities. It uses such concepts as *shirk*, *bid'ah*, and *khurafat* to label these rituals and festivities. With this in mind, Wildan (2009: 87) identifies MTA with the Muhammadiyah which since its early operation aimed to eliminate un-Islamic elements by using the concept of TBC (*tachayul*, *bid'ah*, and *churafat*). However, this concept is also used by many modernist groups other than the Muhammadiyah, such as al-Irsyad and Persis (Persatuan Islam). In my opinion, MTA is much closer to Persis (Persatuan Islam) in terms of their shared strict interpretation of Islam.

Let us move on to MTA FM. Currently, MTA has become increasingly public owing to its success in developing its radio network, MTA FM. It was initiated in 2005 and it started to broadcast at the beginning of 2007 as a community radio (*radio komunitas*). Before that, MTA's *Jihad Pagi* program was broadcasted by HIZ FM. As a community radio station, MTA FM was fully funded by MTA and its members. In addition to MTA FM, MTA has another radio station, Persada FM. In 2009, both radio stations received a broadcasting license and transformed into commercial stations. MTA FM and Persada FM share the same office. The MTA FM website states that the format of the programs this radio broadcasts is imbued with Islamic values in order to attract listeners who are eager to learn about *shari'ah* based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah (Muslim exemplary practices).<sup>40</sup> To reach a wider audience, MTA FM provides listeners with easy access through the use of various modern communication technologies. Since 2010, MTA's programs can be accessed through satellite (*Satelit Palapa*), which makes it easier for listeners from outside Java such as Papua, Sumatra,

Kalimantan, and Sulawesi, to listen to it and participate. Some of them are even willing to come to the Central Building of MTA in Surakarta to participate directly in a *Jihad Pagi* session. MTA FM's programs can be accessed through online live streaming on its website: <http://mtafm.com/>, which is also accessible for Blackberry users. Thanks to its cooperation with one of the largest telephone companies in Indonesia, *Telkomsel*, listeners can easily enjoy MTA FM's programs on their mobile phones.

MTA FM has a range of different broadcasting programs ranging from Islamic sermons, Quranic reading, health consultation, agrobusiness and the economy, to music. Some 70% of these programs are categorized as *dakwah* programs. They include *Jihad Pagi*, *Fajar Hidayah* (The Dawn of God's Guidance), *Murattal Qur'an* (Qur'anic Reading), *Hikayah* (Islamic theatrical stories), *Risalah Tafsir* (Discourse on Qur'anic interpretation), *Risalah Hadits* (Discourse on Hadith), *Ustad Menjawab* (The Teacher Answers), *Tahsin Al-Qur'an* (the Art of Reading the Qur'an), *Hikmah* (Wisdom), and *Muhasabah* (Introspection) (Ariyanto 2010: 97). Relevant to the topic of this chapter are programs that can be categorized under the genre of Islamic questions and answers (*Tanya-Jawab Islam*). MTA FM has at least three such programs, namely *Fajar Hidayah* (The Dawn of God's Guidance), *Ustad Menjawab* (The Teacher Answers) and *Jihad Pagi*. *Fajar Hidayah* is broadcasted every morning (the word '*fajar*' itself means 'dawn' or 'early morning') from 05.00 to 06.00 and features MTA *ustadhs* as well as Ahmad Sukina who regularly chairs the *Jihad Pagi* program on Sunday morning. Various topics are dealt with on *Fajar Hidayah*, including Islamic doctrines, *fiqh*, and daily religious matters. On Sunday morning, *Fajar Hidayah* deals specifically with health issues. In this program, listeners can pose their questions by phone, by sending an SMS as well as by sending text messages through Yahoo Messenger (YM).<sup>41</sup> *Ustad Menjawab* is similar to *Fajar Hidayah*, but it is aired on every Thursday afternoon from 16.00 to 17.00.

## 5.2 MTA, the State, and other organizations

As part of the foundation of Majelis Tafsir Al-Quran (MTA), MTA FM can be seen as representative of a minority group. MTA faced (and still faces) rejection from other groups, especially from the NU. In its struggle for its political position, MTA mobilized religious and political symbols. It established networks with Muslim organizations like the MUI and FUI (Forum Umat Islam, Forum of Muslims) and State officials like ministers and other State officials. It very often invited Muslim figures and organizations as well as State officials to attend the events it organized. For MTA, their presence during those events signaled their support for the organization. This can be seen, for instance, from some statements made by its central leader, Ahmad Sukino in response to criticisms raised by other organizations and Muslims. He frequently said that MTA was not an illegal or illegitimate organization, as shown by the presence of central MUI figures during those events. Sukino claimed that the presence of government officials proves that MTA is a legal organization.

### 5.2.1 The State and political parties

Throughout its history, MTA has been accommodative to the State. During its formative period, its founder, Abdullah Thufail, was politically affiliated with the New Order's *Golkar* (Golongan Karya) party, where he was part of the party's advisory board (Muyadi, Soedarmono, et al. 1999: 155; Jinan 2013: 82-83). After the start of the *Reformasi*, MTA had close connection with the ruling regimes. It gave its implicit political support to the candidacy of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), regardless of its declaration that it was non-partisan. One clear example of this is its rejection to be included in the political advertisement made by the FUI (Forum Ummat Islam). MTA is in fact a member of the FUI since the establishment of the former.<sup>42</sup> In 2009, MTA issued a press release entitled 'MTA Menolak Iklan Politik FUI' (MTA



rejects FUI's political advertisement). In its press release, MTA raised its objection to the political advertisement issued by the FUI in *Republika* daily (4 July 2009). In the advertisement, the FUI claimed that MTA supported the candidacy of Jusuf Kalla (JK) and Wiranto as president and vice-president respectively.<sup>43</sup>

MTA has no explicit ties with any particular political party.<sup>44</sup> However, this does not necessarily mean that it has no political significance in the sense that it has much access to and well-established contacts with the State. This has become more apparent since SBY inaugurated the opening of MTA's new building located in the front of the Mangkunegaran Palace on 8 March 2009. During SBY's visit, Ahmad Sukino lamented the difficulty he had of gaining the broadcast permit for MTA Radio and TV. In response to this lamentation, SBY said, 'I would not like to promise, for that reason I ask the minister of communication and information to help to realize [the legalization of the radio and television station] in accordance with the existing law. *Dakwah* is important, *dakwah* is *the true teaching of Islam*'.<sup>45</sup> The result of this intimacy with the State was that the broadcast permit was given to MTA FM and its new radio station center PERSADA FM (in Sragen) in September 2009.<sup>46</sup> A number of government officials, including various SBY's ministers, visited MTA, such as Siti Fadlilah Supari (Minister of Health), MS Ka'ban (Minister of Forestry), both ministers of SBY's first term cabinet, Nazaruddin Umar (the former Directorate General for the Guidance of Muslim Society, and Vice-minister of Religious Affairs at the time). During the 2014 political campaigns, it seemed that in line with the ending of SBY's presidential term, MTA changed its political support to PAN (National Mandate Party). Some PAN politicians came to *Jihad Pagi* sessions. They included Amin Rais (founder and the advisory head of the party), Hatta Radjasa (the then head of the party), and Azwar Abubakar (the then minister of administrative reforms). Hatta Radjasa, the president candidate of the time, failed in the 2014 election.

### 5.2.2 MUI and other Muslim organizations

The MTA has also forged a close cooperation with other Muslim organizations, among the most important of which are the MUI at the local and national levels. At the local level, the chief of MUI Surakarta is the most often present in MTA's important moments. At the national level, Amidan, Cholil Ridwan, Muhyidin Junaidi, and Syafi'i Antonio are the most prominent MUI figures who were often invited to deliver lectures about Islam in the MTA or they attended the opening of its new branches. For MTA, the MUI has given much support to its *dakwah* activities.<sup>47</sup> In addition, it has a vigilante force that was often present in demonstrations organized by various Muslim organizations (Wildan 2009: 90). It joined the FUI in demanding the Ahmadiyah's dissolution in Indonesia.<sup>48</sup> On 24 August 2007, the MTA sent a delegation to a conference of Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) (Ricklefs 2008: 126). On 19 February 2010, it participated in a demonstration against the withdrawal of Law No. /PNPS/1965 on the Prevention of Religious Defamation (*Pencegahan Penodaan Agama*).<sup>49</sup> The MTA has thus clearly played an important role in contemporary Muslim movements in Indonesia.

The relationship between the MTA and the MUI is important and it has often invited personalities of the central MUI like Amidhan, Ahmad Cholil Ridwan, and Muhiddin Junaidi. In its perception, they represented the central MUI. However, this perception was not always correct. In a meeting, the MUI of Central Java asked the Central MUI to provide its representatives with an official letter when they visited Islamic organizations and institutions, especially at provincial and residential levels. This was to differentiate MUI's members' official visits from private ones. It was clear from the meeting that these MUI figures did not represent the MUI, the institution with which they were affiliated.<sup>50</sup>

MTA's relation with MUI Surakarta is crucial to its legitimation. This can be seen in the frequent involvements of the head of MUI Surakarta, Zaenal Arifin Adnan, in MTA's activities. The MTA seems to be more submissive to MUI Surakarta than to the central MUI. This can clearly be seen in the case of counter-terrorism. Countering the de-radicalization imposed by the State, MUI Surakarta published a special book or '*buku putih*' (white book) entitled *Kritik Evaluasi dan Dekonstruksi Gerakan Deradikalisasi Aqidah Muslimin di Indonesia* (Criticism against the Evaluation and the Deconstruction of the Deradicalization Movements of the Muslim Faith in Indonesia) in 2011.<sup>51</sup> In response to the publication of the book, the central MUI demanded it to be withdrawn from circulation. Amin Ma'ruf, the head of the Central MUI, regretted that MUI Surakarta had hastily published the book while the central MUI had become a partner of the BNPT (Indonesian National Counterterrorism Agency) in countering terrorism and radicalism. He went on to say that MUI Surakarta should have consulted the central MUI before publishing the book because now, the publication might give the impression that both institutions were in conflict.<sup>52</sup>

As a newly go-public organization, the MTA has tried to make its religious identity acceptable to Muslims surrounding it. Compared to the NU and the Muhammadiyah, the MTA is a minority group. As a minority,<sup>53</sup> it seems to follow the so-called '*ghuraba*' (sing: *gharib*, meaning stranger) ideology. This ideology tries to emphasize that nowadays, genuine Islam is often considered strange just like at the time it came to the world at the first time. This is taken from an authentic *hadith* that says: 'Islam started as a stranger, and it will return as it started; so blessed are the *ghuraba*' (those strange people)' (see, for example, al-Naisaburi 1991: 130-31). This ideology is common not only among Salafi groups<sup>54</sup> but also among other Muslim minority groups such as the MTA. The followers of this ideology believe that their Islamic interpretation is authentic

since it is based on the primary sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. They consider themselves 'strange' because they hold on to true Islam which is different from the kind of Islam adhered to by the majority of Muslims, which has deviated from the truth. MTA also uses this hadith to respond to the difficulties its members in a number of regions have when they engage in their *dakwah* activities. For example, in the *Jihad Pagi* session of 1 August 2010, Ahmad Sukino explained the challenges people face in their struggle for Islam as based on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*. On its website, the MTA states that '...some of our brothers [and sisters] who live their religion according to the tuntunan (the correct guidance) may even be marginalized, boycotted and even expelled by physical violence'.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, although the MTA does not use the term *ghuraba'*, it tries to use the notion of 'strangeness' to construct its religious identity within the context of competition among the existing Muslim groups.

### 5.3 Towards legal recognition

In May 2009, the KPID (Indonesian Regional Broadcasting Commission) of Central Java sent out a warning to MTA FM for its broadcasting programs. According to the KPID, the MTA had offended other Muslim elements, especially members of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Zaenal Arifin Petir of the KPID said that the sermons MTA FM aired insulted Muslims who had long held *tahlilan*.<sup>56</sup> For this reason, MTA FM had infringed the Regulation of KPI Nos. 2 and 3 of 2007 on the guidelines of the broadcasting code of conduct and broadcasting program standards.<sup>57</sup> In order to sidestep this legal constrain, the MTA took various political measures to approach the government under SBY. During SBY's rule, a number of State officials had been invited to visit the MTA as already is mentioned above. The outcome of this political approach became clear in the process in the issuance of the broadcasting license. The peak of this process was SBY's visit to the MTA.

On 8 March 2009, SBY inaugurated the opening of the new MTA building. At the end of his speech, SBY asked Minister of Communication and Information, Muhammad Nuh, to help MTA FM arrange the broadcast license for MTA FM.<sup>58</sup> He said jokingly that he was not promising the issuance of the license. However, he clearly signaled that the license would be issued as all the requirements had been met. Finally, on 19 October 2009 the license was given, not only to MTA FM as a non-commercial community radio but also to its commercial radio channel, PERSADA FM.<sup>59</sup> This is an ample example of how effective MTA and MTA FM political efforts to approach the State to obtain its political support was. KPID visitation of Central Java years later, as illustrated in the beginning of this section, can be understood as the fruit of the long process of political negotiation with the State on the one hand, and the KPID's weakening control over MTA FM after SBY's visit to the MTA.

On 9 December 2012, members of the KPID of Central Java, including Zainal Arifin Petir and his colleagues, were invited to the *Jihad Pagi* session. In this session, Petir explained the KPID's main task and authority in relation to radio and television broadcasting. He framed his explanation in a religious perspective. He said that the KPID's task was *amr al-ma'ruf nahi 'an al-munkar* (commanding the good and forbidding the wrong). This was the translation of the KPID's function to control and supervise all kinds of broadcasting activities within its territory. Asked about other Muslim groups' demand for the dissolution of MTA FM who felt upset by its *pengajians*, Petir rhetorically answered that KPID had the right to examine the *pengajians*' contents, not to close down the radio station. One person among the audience asked him about his statement that if MTA FM upset other Muslims, it had to close down. In response to this, Petir said that he only stated that MTA FM could be closed down only if it infringed the law.<sup>60</sup> Regardless of his rhetoric, his presence at the *Jihad Pagi*

was politically meaningful both for the KPID and the MTA. For the KPID, it was an opportunity to clarify its earlier statement that MTA FM should be closed down because its *pengajians* upset other Muslim groups. By making this clarification, the KPID did not contradict the fact that SBY had inaugurated the MTA's new building and that MTA FM was a legal radio station. For the MTA, this was a political resource that led to its success in becoming a powerful *dakwah* radio station.

## 6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, I have explored various factors that have become the driving forces behind *dakwah* radio stations. I have demonstrated that they emerged in the midst of the changes that Indonesian Islam had witnessed after the start of the *Reformation* era. I have highlighted the emergence of new forms of religious authority stimulated by mass education and mass communication technologies. The emerging public presence of radio preachers is an ample proof of the significance of *dakwah* radio stations. I have discussed the institutions that played a role in the emergence of *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta, including mosques, *pesantren*, and *majlis taklim*. They emerged as community radio stations (*radio komunitas*) that primarily served the interests of their communities. The emergence of *dakwah* radio stations has led to competition over religious authority. This competition has manifested itself in various Islamic discourses aired on these stations. In this regard, I have discussed three important Islamic discourses, including *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*, purification and indigenization of Islam, and the implementation of *shari'ah*. I have also presented MTA FM as an example of how a *dakwah* radio station struggled for power.

By way of conclusion, let me take the MTA FM case to answer the questions proposed earlier in this chapter: What factors have

played a significant role in the competition, and how has a *dakwah* radio station like MTA FM exploited its resources in order to assume power and domination? From the discussion above, it can be said that political factors were important in the competition, in addition to religious orientations. MTA FM represents a minority group, which is the MTA foundation. It competed with other radio stations representative of majority groups like the NU. Ideologically, the MTA does not clearly represent the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* the majority of Indonesian Muslims adhere to. In this case, its ideological position has always been questioned not only by the NU but also by minority groups like the Salafis. As demonstrated above, MTA FM succeeded in competing with others due not to its ideological position but to its success in exploiting and mobilizing resources of power by establishing networks and relations with other religious institutions, particularly the MUI, and the State. The profitable relation of the MTA with some MUI members became a sort of legitimization for its religious stance. Its struggles for legal recognition demonstrate that State intervention played an important role in giving it its political position.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Regarding the *Reformasi* Indonesian context, Muhamad Ali has offered a working definition of 'moderate Islam'. For him, moderate Muslims are those who take missions and actions different from those taken by hardliners (*garis keras*) such as Jamaah Islamiyah, DI/TII, MMI, FPI and HTI. Moderate Islam takes a *tawassut* (moderate) stance and avoids the use of violence in doing *dakwah*. See Muhamad Ali 2007: 202-240.
- <sup>2</sup> Interview with Dian Nafi', Surakarta, 8 September 2012.
- <sup>3</sup> This is also the case in Arab countries. See Eickelman 1992: 643-655.
- <sup>4</sup> Dawam Rahardjo has already identified this change in the era of the New Order in his book *Intelektual Inteligensia dan Perilaku Politik Bangsa: Risalah Cendekiawan Muslim* (1996), especially the introduction. Rahardjo makes a distinction between *ulama-cendekiawan* and *cendekiawan-ulama*, between those ulama with additional secular knowledge and those trained in secular education with deep religious knowledge. These two types of new religious elites and intellectuals were the result of educational developments.
- <sup>5</sup> On celebrity Muslim preachers and criticism of them, see Hadi 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.fimadani.com/ahmad-sarwat-ustadz-selebritis-mematok-tarif-rp-30-juta-per-15-menit/> (accessed: 17 July 2013).

- <sup>7</sup> <http://koran.tempo.co/konten/2012/08/29/284307/MUI-Banyak-Ustad-Tak-Jaga-Sikap-di-TV> (accessed: 17 July 2013).
- <sup>8</sup> 'PBNU Minta Hentikan Perebutan Masjid,' <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,1-id,34016-lang,id-c,warta-t,PBNU+Minta+PKS+Hentikan+Perebutan+Masjid-.phpx> (accessed: 20 June 2013). See also Rahmat 2008: 138.
- <sup>9</sup> See <http://rdsfmsolo.com/jadwal-tausiyah-romadhon-1433-h-masjid-istiqlal-solo.html>
- <sup>10</sup> Many Indonesian writers argue that *pesantrens* have existed since the coming of Islam to Java. Dutch scholar, Martin van Bruinessen, has a different opinion as he thinks that *pesantren* did not appear until the end of the eighteenth century. See Van Bruinessen 1995.
- <sup>11</sup> <http://www.radiomadufm.com/>
- <sup>12</sup> <http://madinululum.wordpress.com>
- <sup>13</sup> The polarization of Salafis in Indonesia was first triggered by internal conflicts and leadership competition which then turned into debates about who the real Salafi were. For further discussion, see Hasan 2006, chapter three.
- <sup>14</sup> When I visited Suara Quran FM in 2009, I asked about its connection with Radio Darussalaf. A broadcaster of this radio station said that they had no connection at all.
- <sup>15</sup> For a further discussion on *majlis taklim* founded by Abdullah Syafi'i, see Alawiyah 1997.
- <sup>16</sup> An historical study of these institutions may be found in George Makdisi 1981. A special note has to be made about *majlis taklim* and *pesantren*. The term *majlis taklim* was first popularised in the 1960s, especially by K.H. Abdullah Syafii, the founder of Pesantren As Syafiiyah in Jakarta. *Pesantren* or *pondok pesantren* is used to refer to Islamic educational institutions in Java in particular and in Indonesia in general.
- <sup>17</sup> For further discussion on NU's version of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*, see al-Sinuri n.d.
- <sup>18</sup> A special discussion on the Muhammadiyah and the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*, see Fauzan Saleh 2001: 75-85, esp. 78.
- <sup>19</sup> The video of the lecture can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=daznQriplyI> (accessed 17 May 2015).
- <sup>20</sup> On this movement, see Formichi 2014.
- <sup>21</sup> Joseph Tamney (1980: 207-218) puts forward two meanings of purification in the context of Islamic modernism in Indonesia: one is the elimination of external religious elements, and the other the separation of universal religions from folk religions.
- <sup>22</sup> There is also *grebeg besar*, a similar festive found in Demak. It is held on every the 10th of Dhu-l Hijjah (the 12th month of Islamic calendar). On *Grebeg besar* festive, see Muawanah 2006: 435-465.
- <sup>23</sup> On the *Tarekat Naqsyabandiyah* and its variants in Indonesia, see Van Bruinessen 1992.
- <sup>24</sup> The Seven Words reads: 'with the obligation for adherents of the faith to carry out *shari'ah*' (*Dengan kewajiban menjalankan syariat Islam bagi pemeluknya*). Further on the 'Seven Words' and its controversy, Ichwan 2003: 23-24.
- <sup>25</sup> Here the resonance of Abu Bakar Baasyir's advice sounds very clearly in running text on the mosque's wall. In his *Tadzkirah* (2012: 9), Baasyir strongly states the necessity of the implementation of *shari'ah* and condemns the *taghut* system, including the Indonesian State system. The only way to remedy this 'sinful' state system, according to Baasyir, is to replace the Pancasila State ideology (Five Pillars of Indonesia) and its positive law entirely with *shari'ah*.
- <sup>26</sup> <http://www.rdsfmsolo.com/berita/lokal/mui-solo-bentuk-dewan-syariah-kota.html> (accessed: 13 March 2013).



- <sup>27</sup> According to one source, Dewan Syariah Kota Surakarta was initially established as a rejection of the appointment of Hadi Rudyatmo as the Mayor of Surakarta city replacing Joko Widodo (Jokowi) who was elected as governor of Jakarta. <http://www.muslimdaily.net/berita/lokal/jokowi-menang-di-pilgub-jakarta-umat-islam-siapkan-dewan-syariah-di-solo.html#.Ud501KyZVzU> (accessed: 11 July 2013).
- <sup>28</sup> My personal field note of the Pengajian Dzikir Dan Shalawat Majelis Al-Hidayah, 28 September 2012. He is the leader of Pondok Pesantren Darul Musthofa in Karanganyar. For further information on him, see <http://pecintahabibana.wordpress.com/2013/01/30/habib-sholeh-al-jufri-pengasuh-pondok-pesantren-darul-musthofa-solo/>
- <sup>29</sup> Personal communication by phone with Alfandi of Al-Hidayah FM, 5 March 2012.
- <sup>30</sup> This was also stated by H. Soni Parsono, the director of Al-Hidayah FM at Pengajian Silaturrahmi in Masjid Al-Hidayah, 12 June 2012.
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.elhooda.net/2012/04/kajian-rutin-mingguan-islam-ahlussunnah-majelis-al-hidayah-di-masjid-jami-al-hidayah-solo/>.
- <sup>32</sup> On MTA's stance toward the implementation of *shari'ah*, see Ahmad Sukino 2012: 138-154.
- <sup>33</sup> On these three figures and their *dakwah* activities, see Wildan 2009, Chap. 3.
- <sup>34</sup> Ahmad Sukino was born in Gawok, Sukoharjo, in 1948. He graduated from Tarbiyah faculty, Islamic Institute of Muhammadiyah (IAIM) which later transformed into Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta (UMS). Further information on Ahmad Sukino will be presented in chapter four.
- <sup>35</sup> Recorded CD, *Pengajian Ahad Pagi, Edisi 165 tentang Musik dan Nyanyian* (2008).
- <sup>36</sup> Personal communication with Sutikno, an MTA public relations staff member via Yahoo messenger (YM), 1 December 2010.
- <sup>37</sup> Elsewhere I have analyzed this tendency in connection with Qur'anic interpretation. See Sunarwoto 2011: 118-30. I should add here that my observation on MTA is different from that of Syaifudin Zuhri (2009: 219), who said that Ahmad Sukino is merely an interpreter of Abdullah Thufail's religious thought and comments on questions raised by MTA's members.
- <sup>38</sup> This excerpt is taken from the recorded CD entitled, *Pengajian Ahad Pagi, Edisi 165 tentang Musik dan Nyanyian* (2008).
- <sup>39</sup> This puritan category is used by Ricklefs, Syaifudin Zuhri, and Said Aqiel Siradj.
- <sup>40</sup> [http://mtafm.com/v1/?page\\_id=1140](http://mtafm.com/v1/?page_id=1140) (accessed 1 December 2011).
- <sup>41</sup> [http://mtafm.com/v1/?page\\_id=40](http://mtafm.com/v1/?page_id=40) (accessed 1 December 2011). I myself often participated by sending SMS as well as text messages via Yahoo Messenger (YM).
- <sup>42</sup> The FUI was established in 2005 and led by Muhammad Al-Khatthath of the HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia). On the FUI, see Tim Setara Institute 2010:137-148.
- <sup>43</sup> <http://www.mta.or.id/2009/07/06/mta-tolak-iklan-politik-fui/> (accessed 6 March 2013); Yayasan Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (MTA), 'Pers Release: MTA Menolak Iklan Politik FUI', 2009. MTA was not alone in raising objections to the advertisement. The PKS (Justice and Prosperity Party) also protested against it, since, according to the PKS, the advertisement was made without the prior consent of the related organizations in which PKS was included. PKS' rejection was understandable, since in the 2009 election it had given its support to the candidacy of Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) and Budiono as president and vice-president respectively. See <http://news.detik.com/read/2009/07/04/220501/1159179/700/dicatat-fui-dalam-iklan-dukung-jk-wiranto-pks-protas-minta-ralat?nd771104bcj> (accessed 6 March 2013).
- <sup>44</sup> MTA's stance toward political parties can be found in Ahmad Sukino 2012: 30-39 and 40-49.

- <sup>45</sup> 'Al-ustadz Keluhkan Sulitnya Memperoleh Ijin Radio dan TV di Hadapan Presiden', <http://mtafm.com/v1/?p=999> (accessed 6 January 2012). Italic English words are original.
- <sup>46</sup> 'Kabar Gembira Perizinan Radio MTA FM,' <http://mtafm.com/v1/?p=14> (accessed 6 January 2012).
- <sup>47</sup> This can be seen, for example, in a news report entitled 'MUI Menyertai MTA dalam Mengembangkan Dakwah' (MUI Accompanies MTA in Developing Dakwah) at <http://mtafm.com/v1/?p=2236> (accessed 7 January 2012).
- <sup>48</sup> See <http://www.suara-islam.com/news/gerakan-islam/harakah-kontemporer/3569-fui-umat-islam-menunggu-keppres-pembubaran-ahmadiyah>
- <sup>49</sup> <http://mta-online.com/v2/2010/02/20/42-organisasi-di-surakarta-tolak-pencabutan-uu-anti-penodaan-agama/>
- <sup>50</sup> CD *Pertemuan MTA dengan MUI Jawa Tengah di MUI Pusat*.
- <sup>51</sup> <http://suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/cetak/2011/08/04/154985/MUI-Solo-Koreksi-Deradikalisasi> (accessed 6 March 2013).
- <sup>52</sup> <http://nahimunkar.com/mui-pusat-minta-buku-gerakan-deradikalisasi-ditarik/> (accessed 6 March 2013).
- <sup>53</sup> I use this minority category following a research report made by the Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Provinsi Jawa Tengah 2006.
- <sup>54</sup> On the concept '*ghuraba*' among Salafis, see the website of Bin Baz: <http://www.binbaz.org.sa/mat/4724> (accessed 6 January 2012).
- <sup>55</sup> 'Ujian Umat Terdahulu Jauh Lebih Berat Daripada Kita', <http://mtafm.com/v1/?p=2337#more-2337> (accessed 7 January 2012); and its recorded *Jihad Pagi* version, code number: 100801\_jp.
- <sup>56</sup> *Tahlilan*: communal reading of *la ilaha illa Allah* for the dead.
- <sup>57</sup> 'Radio MTA Solo "Disemprit" KPID,' <http://oase.kompas.com/read/2009/05/30/23411248/Radio.MTA.Solo.Disemprit.KPID> (accessed 4 March 2013), 'Melarang Tahlilan, KPI Jawa Tengah Tegur Radio MTA Solo,' at <http://www.tempo.co/read/news/2009/05/28/058178600/Melarang-Tahlilan-KPI-Jawa-Tengah-Tegur-Radio-MTA-Solo> (accessed 4 March 2013).
- <sup>58</sup> CD *Gedung MTA* (8 March 2009).
- <sup>59</sup> <http://mtafm.com/v1/archives/category/news/page/3> (accessed 14 March 2013).
- <sup>60</sup> The video of Petir's speech can be found at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1maN\\_L26s4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1maN_L26s4) (accessed 14 July 2013).



## CHAPTER FOUR

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# RADIO PREACHERS' RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY CONSTRUCTION AND CONTESTATION

### 1 Introduction

A public controversy occurred in early 2012, triggered by the circulation of two video sermons on YouTube. Both sermons had been delivered in 2011 by a *kyai* named Marzuki Mustamar, the then head of the Malang branch of the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in East Java.<sup>1</sup> The first sermon was given at the Majelis Maulid Watta'lim Roudlotussalaf in Bangil, East Java, while the second was addressed to the celebration of the end of the academic year (*haflah akhir al-sanah*) in Pondok Pesantren Bahrul Ulum in Jombang, East Java. In both sermons, Mustamar warned his congregations of the danger of various Islamic groups who, according to him, might threaten the existence of the teachings of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l-Jama'ah* and, more broadly, that of Indonesia as a nation.<sup>2</sup> One of these groups was the MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-

Qur'an) in Surakarta. He specifically criticized the MTA leader, Ahmad Sukino, whom he ironically called '*al-Shaikh al-Akbar*' (the Great Master). One of his critical points was that Ahmad Sukino was unable to 'read' the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, one of the two greatest collections of prophetic *hadith*, 'without vowel marks' (*gundulan*).<sup>3</sup> He also labelled the MTA as 'a group of stupid people who claimed to be knowledgeable (about Islam).'<sup>4</sup> In addition to Mustamar's sermons, the controversy was also fueled by another sermon delivered by a *habib* from Purwodadi, Central Java. In his sermon, the *habib* criticized the MTA of humiliating the ancestors of Javanese Muslims called the *Walisongo*. He said that a number of people, after joining the Islamic gatherings organized by MTA, came to him and referring to Sukino's sermon, they told the *habib* that the Islamic teaching of the *Walisongo* had no sound textual basis (*ora ono tuntunane*) in Islam. To them, he suggested, '... If all of you do not understand [the matters of Islam], [you] better ask a *kyai*. [If he] gives you a *fiqh* reading, do practice it! That's it. Do not return to the Qur'an [directly], it is dangerous! Because the Qur'an contains many things...'<sup>5</sup>

Ahmad Sukino responded to the critics above by opening a special discussion in a *Jihad Pagi* session broadcast on MTA FM and MTA TV.<sup>6</sup> As for the first critic, rather than problematizing the capability of reading the *Sahih Bukhari*, Sukino was more interested in the other issues Mustamar had raised. He rejected the accusation that he banned *tahlilan* and that MTA members sold *sate anjing* (dog meat skewers). According to him, these accusations were not based on facts. Sukino further said that these accusations should not have come from a *kyai*, that therefore Mustamar did not deserve the title *kyai*, and that the *ummah* should not follow a *kyai* like him. Sukino said, 'If a *kyai* like him has followers, then where will he bring them?'<sup>7</sup> As for the *habib*'s criticism, Ahmad Sukino was concerned with the doctrine of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. He problematized the *habib*'s

argument that law should not be taken from the Qur'an and *hadith*, which, according to him, was wrong and contradicted the Qur'an itself. He said, 'The Qur'an even says 'do not go away from the Qur'an. *Wala tattabi'u al-subula fa-tafarraqa bikum 'an sabilihi*.<sup>8</sup> If you take a path other than the Qur'an, you go astray from the straight path ...'<sup>9</sup> I will come back to this public controversy later.

On 28 January 2012, a mass demonstration was held to forcefully close down the Islamic public gatherings (*pengajian umum*) of the MTA in Kudus, Central Java. The event was aimed to officially open the local Kudus branch of the MTA. The demonstration was mobilized by NU-affiliated activists who considered the MTA as having attacked the NU's religious understanding and tradition. The coordinator of the demonstration, as quoted by *antarateng.com*,<sup>10</sup> said,

'[In] the public gatherings [MTA] also once offended kyais. Fatally, [MTA considers that] the sin of those engaging in tahlil [tahlilan] is bigger than that of adultery. In fact, doing tahlil has become a tradition of NU members'.

In response to this demonstration, Ahmad Sukino stated, among other things, that those who ever listened to MTA FM with a 'pure heart' (*hati yang bersih*) would not find that it broadcasts sermons stating that the sin of engaging in *tahlil* is bigger than that of adultery. He considered all these accusations as *fitnah* (slander).

The examples above are an important entry into the subject of this chapter, which is radio preachers' religious authority. A number of issues related to religious authority can be drawn from them. One is the nature of the controversy. Mediated by various forms of modern media, including the Internet, YouTube, VCD, and the radio, they raise the question of radio-mediated authority: To what extent did the mediation influence the construction of this authority? The next issue relates to the different actors endowed

with religious authority involved in the debate, including *kyai*, *habib* (Ar. beloved), and *ustadh* (Ar. teacher). While a *kyai* yields a local Javanese form of authority, the two others have global Arabic roots. It is clear that ideologically, the nature of the contestation of authority above can be framed within two contrasting types of Islamic interpretation: return to the authority of the ulama of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* (as represented by the *kyai* and the *habib*) and a return to the authority of the Qur'an (and the Sunnah) (as represented by the *ustadh*). It has to be noted that these two types are not well defined as their meanings vary from one to another group. For instance, Salafi groups consider that a return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah can only be undertaken by following the interpretation of the past pious generations (*salaf al-ummah*). This is similar to a return to the authority of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* as hold by the *habib* above in particular and NU members in general. Nevertheless, Salafis, NU members and the *habib* disagree on who the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* are. For the NU, the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'a* are followers of the four Sunni schools in Islamic law (*madhhab*), of al-Junaid al-Baghdadi and al-Ghazali in Sufism, and of al-Ash'ari and al-Maturidi in theology. For Salafis, as formulated by Salih al-Fauzan (2012: 14-15), the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* include those who strictly follow (1) the prophetic Sunnah and (2) the truth (*al-haqq*).<sup>11</sup>

This chapter aims to discuss the religious authority of radio preachers. It addresses the following questions: Who are these radio preachers? What conditions have contributed to their public presence? To what extent did *dakwah* radio play a role in their religious authority? The second section concerns the new *dakwah* environment within which radio preachers turned into public figures. The next section describes who the radio preachers are by referring to those preachers who gave sermons on *dakwah* radio stations or whose sermons were regularly aired on these stations. It focuses on the religious titles that radio preachers bear,

since they reflect the forms of authority to which they are entitled. In addition to their religious titles, further description concerns the profiles of some radio preachers in order to illuminate their socio-religious and intellectual background. The fourth section presents the case study of a radio preacher in order to show how radio-mediated authority has been claimed and was exerted. The concluding section answers the above questions.

## **2 New *dakwah* environment**

In what follows, I will shine light on the new *dakwah* environment by looking at the commodification of Islam in Indonesia during the last two decades and its implication for the rise of (new) religious authorities. The emergence of radio preachers is inseparably linked to the increasing religious commodification and Islamization that have been taking place over the last two decades. Both processes should be taken into account together. Greg Fealy (2008: 16) defines commodification of Islam as 'the commercialization of Islam, or the turning of faith and its symbols into a commodity capable of being bought and sold for profit'. He notes that the phenomenon is marked by the increase of the consumption of Islamic products and increasing religiosity. Economy and religiosity, the increasing consumption of Islamic products and expressions of Islamic faith were intertwined. New feelings of pride of being Muslim were expressed in Muslims' consumption of Islamic products and the adoption of an Islamic life style. The more Muslims consumed Islamic products, the larger the market for Islamic commodities. Lukens-Bull (2008: 220-34) points out that the commodification of Islam goes through two processes. First is the infusion of commodities with Islamic meaning or a process of the ideologization and religification of these commodities. The second process is expressing that meaning in material forms, a process called the commoditization of religion. However, religious commodification cannot be separated from the Islamization process



in which it plays a significant role. The Islamization process takes the form of becoming closer to the orthodoxy of Islam. In this process, more and more Muslims adopt Islamic ways in their daily lives. However, the process is not that simple. As Ariel Heryanto (2014: 26) put forward, it is 'a complex set of processes with multi directions'. Heryanto (2014: 26) characterized this process further as follows: 'The rapid and persistently expanding scope, visibility, and massive collaboration of material elements and practices that are widely understood in the immediate Indonesian community to contain Islamic or 'Islamized' values.'

No doubt, television has played a significant role in the public recognition of Muslim preachers. In Indonesia, this phenomenon can be traced back to the early establishment of private television stations in the 1990s. Since then, more space has been allotted to broadcasting Islamic sermons and other Islamic programs. Akh Muzakki has demonstrated how television industries have played a significant role in the changing social landscape of Muslim preachers. He differentiates the sociological backgrounds of the TV preachers of the late twentieth century from those of the early 21st century. The former were dominated by those trained in Islamic disciplines or *santri* (*pesantren* student), while the latter were dominated by popular preachers without a *pesantren* background (Muzakki 2008: 107). However, not all these television preachers of the late 20th century were actually trained in *pesantren*. It is more appropriate to categorize them into preachers who were trained in Islamic disciplines either in or outside *pesantren* like those educated at IAIN (State Institute for Islamic Studies), or UIN (State Islamic Universities), and those who were not. This changing *dakwah* landscape cannot be separated from commercial considerations. This can be seen from how television stations popularized the preachers. Some television stations organized contests for future preachers leading to the production of various celebrity preachers. Besides making profit, it is no doubt that they

gained public recognition for their role in teaching Islamic matters through their television shows.

Throughout the history of radio in the archipelago Muslim preachers and leaders utilized it as their medium for sending Islamic messages. For instance, once a month since the 1930s, Agus Salim (d. 1954), one of the key figures in Islamic movements, delivered Islamic sermons on the NIROM section of Siaran Ketimoeran. The Islamic lectures of Haji Abdul Malik Karim Amrullah or well known as Hamka (d. 1981), a renowned *'alim* and a man of letters, were produced on cassettes and aired on the national radio station RRI (Radio Republik Indonesia). In the 1980s, Kosim Nurzeha (d. 2013) was a famous preacher thanks to his sermon broadcasts on Radio Kayu Manis Jakarta.<sup>12</sup> Zainuddin MZ (d. 2011) became well known as 'the preacher of one million *ummah*' (*da'i sejuta ummat*) first through his cassette sermons played on radio, before performing on national television.

Apart from these television preachers, it is difficult to gauge the extent to which the radio industry has played a role in the creation of celebrity preachers. This is so for several reasons. One is that since the 2000s, the radio industry has not produced celebrity preachers at the national level. The popularity of radio preachers was, and, to some extent is, often confined to their local listeners only. This is in contrast to the 1990s situation, when various radio preachers like Zainuddin MZ had already gained popularity at the national level before they performed on national TV. Exceptions are some Salafi radio stations that have wide networks at the national scale. Salafi-run Radio Rodja, for instance, has wide networks throughout Indonesia. Various Salafi preachers have become well known but only in their own Salafi circles. In Surakarta, MTA FM can be considered the most successful radio station in gaining wide public attention. It has a wide network with radio stations run by MTA members and sympathizers throughout the country. Nevertheless, although

they have this wide network, these preachers have been unable to reach the kind of national popularity the television preachers used to have as their popularity is confined to their MTA co-members. Recently the popularity of Ahmad Sukino, the head of MTA, has increased up to the national level, but that came about only after his public presence on television. The degree of his popularity is also a far cry from that of the old television preachers.

Secondly, the radio industry, from which radio preachers gain popularity, is also local in scope. It is outside the mainstream radio industry. According to observers (e.g., Sudibyo 2004; Nugroho, Putri & Laksmi 2012), this mainstream radio industry has been characterized by ownership concentration and radio conglomeration. The concentration and conglomeration of the radio industry are part of a wider media conglomeration. The same conglomerates own many radio and television stations at the national level. Within this broader network, radio celebrities or famous persons can easily reach public recognition, and they are even more able to do so, when they have also become television celebrities. None of the *dakwah* radio stations belongs to the mainstream radio industry in particular and to the mainstream media in general. As mentioned in chapter one, *dakwah* radio stations sprung up from community groups. They started to appear as community radios (*radio komunitas*). This fact indicates that *dakwah* radio stations are not part of the web of radio industry's wide networks and it is beyond the monopoly control of the large media industries based mostly in Jakarta.<sup>13</sup>

It is important to look at media technologies other than television and radio that made it possible to popularize Muslim preachers. VCD (Video Compact Disc) and CD (Compact Disc) are one such medium. This 'small medium' has become popular in Indonesia in the late 1990s. R. Anderson Sutton (2011: 85-100) has explored the recording industry including VCD, DVD, and CD by particularly focusing on Islamic music genres circulating

after 1998. He observed that these recording technologies have become 'a prominent source of material for radio and television broadcast' (Sutton 2011: 86). His investigation of music VCDs, DVDs, and CDs sold commercially in various stores in Yogyakarta demonstrates the changing senses of community and social solidarity of Muslims in Indonesia (Sutton 2011: 96). Suzanne Naafs (2010: 342-89), demonstrates the importance of this medium for young female Muslim artists in West Sumatra in expressing their religious identity. The popularity of music VCDs has gone hand in hand with two other phenomena: the pirating industry and the popularity of *karaoke* (Naafs 2010: 343). Nowadays VCD/CD has also become an important tool for recording Islamic events like public preaching (*pengajian*) and Islamic celebrations. The easy dissemination of both *pengajian* VCDs and CDs made Muslim preachers from rural places known to wider segments of Muslim society while others became local celebrities. Some *pengajian* VCD or CD recordings were produced by the *pengajian* organizers; others were produced by local recording industries. The *pengajian* VCD and CD industry has to do with the Muslim radio industry. Many programs broadcasted on *dakwah* radio stations are taken from Islamic VCDs and CDs, like *murattal* (Qur'anic recitation), Islamic songs and others, sold commercially in the marketplace. What is interesting, however, is that institutions with which those radio stations have ties produced their own recordings of *pengajian* and other related religious activities. These recordings are not sold in the marketplace but were only produced for and sold in limited circles. This does not necessarily mean that those CDs and VCDs are consumed only by few. The business networks play important roles in widening the consumer target.

In Surakarta, the nexus of the Islamic VCD/CD industry and *dakwah* radio stations is very prevalent. A number of the mother institutions of *dakwah* radio stations produced sermon VCDs and CDs. Besides being sold to internal members, these VCDs and

CDs have become important material for their programs. The MTA foundation, for instance, produced *Jihad Pagi* recordings besides books and magazines and other activities like MTA branch openings, arts festivals and exhibitions, and devotional manuals were also recorded on VCDs and CDs. They are sold to internal circles and not in marketplace. The price varies from IDR. 15,000 (which equals 1 euro) to IDR 25,000. MTA is the best in documenting its sermons either in printed publications or as recordings. All the *Jihad Pagi* sessions from 2005 to the present are available in books (*Brosur* collection) and in CD and VCD recordings. On the cover of the *Jihad Pagi* CDs/VCDs was, besides the MTA logo, the picture of MTA's central leader, Ahmad Sukino, symbolizing the greatest authority of the organization. Likewise, Majelis Al-Hidayah, with which Al-Hidayah FM is affiliated, recorded the *pengajians* on CDs and VCDs that it organized and of those organized by other groups. One of them is the *Pengajian Rutin* or routine *pengajian* held in cooperation with the *Carrefour* supermarket. Majelis Al-Hidayah also has a special boutique, *Butik Al-Hidayah*, which sells VCDs and CDs produced by either the Majelis itself or other affiliated *majlis* like Majelis Ahbab al-Musthofa and Jamuro. Besides CDs and VCDs, the boutique also sells jackets, Muslim garments, books, magazines, and other Islamic accessories and paraphernalia. For Al-Hidayah FM, the boutique has become an important financial backbone. Management Pitutur Luhur under which Pitutur Luhur FM is organized produced sermon CDs it sold to the participants of the *pengajian* sermons delivered by Parsono Agus Waluyo, the director of Pitutur Luhur FM. Pitutur Luhur FM airs Islamic sermons every day based on these CDs. The covers of the CDs predominantly display a picture of Parsono Agus Waluyo. Other *dakwah* radio stations like Salafi radio stations imported sermon CDs from their Salafi networks in other cities like Jakarta and Bandung, and these CDs have become one of the main materials they use in their broadcasts.

Non-commercial sermon CDs/VCDs often played an important role in popularizing preachers. They were usually produced by a recording shop on the request of an organizer of a preaching event or by the organizer itself. They were then distributed among a limited number of people. Some were uploaded on the Internet sites like YouTube and blogs. In Surakarta, the sermons by Minardi Mursyid, the leader of YATAIN (Indonesian Monotheism Foundation), were copied on VCDs and circulated among the foundation's members. The sermons were also broadcast on its pirate radio station, which was closed down in 2013. Through these media (VCD and radio), Mursyid was known to public as a controversial religious teacher. He was accused of teaching *inkar al-sunnah* (rejection of the Prophetic Sunnah). The Surakarta branch of MUI (Indonesian Council of Ulama) stated that YATAIN deviated from true Islam, since it did not use *hadith*.<sup>14</sup> He received a threat from a radical group of Muslims who forced him to discontinue his *dakwah* activities and close his radio station. Thanks to YouTube, some pieces of his sermon recordings are still accessible to the public.<sup>15</sup> Currently, facilitating the uploading of sermon videos has become one of the favorable ways to reach a wider audience. Sometimes, a preacher became famous unexpectedly thanks to his sermon videos that people uploaded. Muhammad Nur Maulana, otherwise well known as *Ustadh* Maulana (40 years old) is one example of a successful televangelist preacher whose fame was preceded by his YouTube-uploaded sermons.<sup>16</sup> Currently, sermon recordings of MTA FM, Al-Hidayah FM, and other *dakwah* radio stations may be easily found on YouTube.

### 3 Radio preachers and religious authority

It cannot be denied that radio stations play an important role in making a preacher known to public. They can 'baptize' a guest speaker into a religious figure, for instance, by dubbing him with the title *kyai* or *ustadh* only because he speaks about religion or

often cites religious texts. It is not surprising that a radio speaker in a psychology program can become an *ustadh* when he is familiar with religious texts dealing with psychological issues. They can also make a religious establishment more known to the audience. Establishing a radio station or being a director or the owner of a radio station for the purpose of Islamic proselytization has also been a way for people to become religious leaders. Based on my fieldwork, radio preachers in Surakarta consist of *kyais*, *habibs*, and *ustadhs*.

Before discussing each of them, a brief exposition of the concept of religious authority in Islam is worth to present here. Many works have already been written on religious authority in Islam (the most recent one by Krämer and Schmidtke 2006: 1-14). In Islam, religious authority belongs absolutely to Allah. A derivative form of religious authority is given only to God's prophets and His messengers. This kind of authority demands others to obey them (Kadi 2001: 198). Different from derivative authority, the other form of authority, called 'acquired authority', rests upon a number of factors that may demand people to comply with its holders. In Islam, the holders of acquired authority, who are awarded a high place by Allah (as mentioned in the Qur'an and the *hadith*), are called '*ulama*' (sing. '*alim*'). Their authority is intellectually rooted in their ability to access and interpret the sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the prophetic Sunnah. Western scholars tend to differentiate ulama from Sufis and saints (*wali*). While the two latter tend to focus on popular forms of Islam, ulama stick to the orthodox teachings of Islam.<sup>17</sup> In Indonesia, this distinction is not always applicable. Especially in the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition, ulama can also be both Sufis and *walis*.

### 3.1 *Kyai*, *habib*, and *ustadh*

In Surakarta, *kyai*, *ustadh* and *habib* represent different types of Islamic authority often competing with one another in popularity

stimulated by media. Nowadays they are susceptible to criticism, reflecting the on-going contestation over 'true' Islam, or, in other words, over religious authority. While the term *ulama* dealt with above has the general meaning of Islamic religious experts, local terms referring to them vary from one place to another like *kyai* (Javanese), *ajengan* (Sundanese), *buya* (West Sumatran), *tuan guru* (West Nusa Tenggara), and so on. Relevant to further discussion here is the *kyai*, a term that is commonly used in Central and East Java. For a *pesantren* community, as a religious expert, a *kyai* is the highest authority. He can be the director of a *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) or a religious leader in society. The title *kyai* is extensively used by traditionalists, especially by NU members. However, the term is also used by a modernist organization like the Muhammadiyah. Its founder, Ahmad Dahlan (d. 1923), held this honorific title (*Kyai Haji* [KH] Ahmad Dahlan). Various other Muhammadiyah leaders of Javanese origin also held this title, like *KH* Djarnawi Hadikusumo (d. 1993), *KH* AR Fachruddin (d. 1995). The term *kyai* as used by both NU and Muhammadiyah has a religious meaning and is the equivalent of the term *ulama*. In the colonial period, the Dutch government appointed an official in charge of mosques and Islamic courts called *penghulu* (on *penghulu*, see Hisyam 2001). While a *penghulu* was paid by the government, a *kyai* was an independent teacher of Islam. After independence, *kyai* played an important role. As Clifford Geertz (1960: 228-49) noted, they became 'cultural brokers' who introduced Islamic teaching to the people within the context of newly independent Indonesia, and at the same time, they mediated between the people and the State in the developmental context. The term *kyai* is also used to name Javanese amulets like *kris* (dagger) and even animals considered to be endowed with mystical powers like *Kyai Kebo Slamet* in Surakarta. The popularity of this mystical meaning is limited to those linked with Javanese court culture and this use has been surpassed by the popularity of the religious meaning (*kyai* as a religious leader).



*Habib* (plural *habaib*) means ‘beloved’. It is an honorific title bestowed upon a descent of the Prophet Muhammad, widely used in the Hadramaut, Yemen, and Indonesia. Together with the *sayyid* (lord), the title *habib* demonstrates the highest rank in the social stratification (Mobini-Kesheh 2004: 25). His authority is primarily predicated upon his genealogical ties with the Prophet through linkages with Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatimah, and Husein. Some of them enjoyed education in Middle Eastern countries, others from pesantrens founded by *habibs*, and some others still went to universities. *Habibs* played an important role in the history of the Islamization of the archipelago. At present times, their role in teaching Islam to the public cannot be ignored as may be seen from their *dakwah* activities through establishing *majlis taklim* throughout the country.<sup>18</sup> They are influential not only in religious but also in political life.<sup>19</sup> Media coverage about *habib* figures also contributed to their popularity and some of them have turned into spiritual guides for national celebrities. For some Muslim groups, the religious privilege that *habibs* have is religiously unfounded. They consider that Allah can accord religious privilege to all those who have reached the highest level of piety called *taqwa*, regardless of their ancestral origins. A question was raised to a Salafi teacher, Muhammad Abduh Tausikal, as to whether a *habib* is definitely Allah’s *wali*. Answering the question, he quoted the opinion of Ibn Taimiyah (d. 1328), a Quranic verse, the interpretation of Ibn Kathir (d. 1373), and a *hadith*. He concluded that waliship (sainthood) is not given only to ulama, *habib* or *kyai*. A *habib* is given privilege only because of his genealogical ties with the Prophet. He further said, ‘If he doesn’t have faith and does not do good deeds according to the guide of the Prophet Muhammad ... that privilege will be buried in vain and will be useless.’<sup>20</sup>

*Ustadh* (plural *asatidh*) is an Arabic word, meaning ‘male teacher’, and an *ustadhah* is a female teacher’. In Arab speaking countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt, it also means ‘professor’ in

any field of study, and therefore has no specific religious meaning. In Indonesia, *ustadh* has a religious meaning and an *ustadh* is a teacher of the Qur'an or a religious teacher in general. In a *pesantren* community, an *ustadh* has a lower rank than a *kyai*. He (or she) is an assistant of a *kyai* and responsible for teaching at the *pesantren* that the *kyai* leads. However, in modernist Muslim organizations like Persis and the Muhammadiyah, an *ustadh* can be the highest authority in the organizations, equal to a *kyai*. For example, Ahmad Hassan (d. 1958), one of the most important figures of Persis, held the title *ustadh* (*Ustadh* Ahmad Hassan).

Today, the term *ustadh* has become increasingly popular, especially due to media coverage. It is becoming more and more popular not only among modernists but also among traditionalists and *habibs* as well. The current popularity and the shift in meaning of *ustadh* is inseparable from the efflorescence of *dakwah* activities and new media technologies. Most TV preachers are called *ustadh* regardless of their religious orientation and educational background. The meaning of *ustadh* has become loosely modified and now refers to a preacher who was (and is) well known as a *muballigh* (sermonizer) or a *da'i* (caller to Islam), and its connotation has even become narrowed and no longer means 'religious teacher' or 'religious expert', but rather refers to a '*penceramah*' (sermonizer). A book written by Burhan Shodiq was entitled *Mendadak Ustadz!* (Suddenly [becoming] *Ustadh*). In this book, Shodiq pointed out that the increasing number of mosque buildings is the cause of the late public presence of *ustadhs* (Shodiq 2008: 18). The message in this book is clear: an *ustadh* is not necessarily an expert in Islam.

It is interesting to know how announcers of *dakwah* radio stations perceived radio preachers. Asshidiq Ramadan of Al-Hidayah FM maintained that *kyai*, *ustadh*, and *habib* share the commonality of being *guru* or teacher. *Ustadh* is more popular for listeners than *kyai* (and also *habib*), which is only common to

listeners of *Aswaja* (Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the use of the title *ustadh* for radio preachers has become more widely acceptable.<sup>22</sup> Here is an example of how Ramadan introduced a preacher, who was a *habib*, to his listeners:

'*Alhamdulillah*, sahabat, di kesempatan pagi kali ini... di sini ada Asshidiq yang akan menemani sahabat-sahabatku semuanya di dialog *Sirah Nabawiyah*, selama satu setengah jam ke depan, tentunya bersama *guru* kita, *Al-Habib* Abu Bakar Fahmi Assegaf yang akan menemani kita semuanya ...'

(Thanks to Allah, brothers, on the occasion of this morning ... here Asshiddiq will accompany all [of you] my brothers in the dialog on *Sirah Nabawiyah* for the next one and half hours. Of course, together with our *guru*, *Al-Habib* Abu Bakar Fahmi Assegaf, who will accompany all of us ...)

Hastomo, also of Al-Hidayah FM, has a somewhat different conception. For him, a *guru* or a teacher is the one from whom a person (student) learns (Islam). Since most listeners have never directly met and studied with a radio preacher, the use of the appellation *ustadh* is unsuitable for all radio preachers. In practice, Hastomo preferred calling a radio preacher by his specific religious titles like *kyai* or *habib* and his academic title (if any).<sup>23</sup>

It should be noted that the term *guru* is not commonly used to denote radio preachers. As can be seen above, two radio broadcasters of the same station disagreed on the use of the term. The most common designation used is *ustadh*. Nowadays, the ambiguous role of *ustadhs* is susceptible to criticism. On the one hand, *ustadhs* play the role of religious preachers. On the other, they also act as entertainers so that there is virtually no difference between them and celebrities. The glamorous lifestyle of some of them is often criticized as contrary to the modesty Islam teaches. Given the existing controversies, the concept of *ustadh* as a new type of religious authority (not religious teacher but sermonizer) has been called into question. Some

people wonder what an *ustadh* is, how he should look like, and whether he is a religious scholar or not. A certain *ustadh* named Ahmad Sarwat was asked as to the difference between *ulama*, *kyai*, *ustadh* and *pendakwah* (*da'i*, preacher). In his answer to the questions, he tended to defend the religious connotation of *ustadhs* by differentiating them from sermonizers (*penceramah*). According to him, an *ustadh* is a religious teacher at whatever level, and in Saudi Arabia it applies to a professor in religious disciplines. He said, 'Only those with doctoral degrees (S3)<sup>24</sup> and who gained a professorship are entitled to the title *Al-Ustadh*. More or less [it] means professor in religious sciences.' By contrast, anybody can be a *penceramah*, and they can preach and sermonize about whatever they want. A *penceramah* has to cater to the taste of his audience.<sup>25</sup> Ziaul Haq, who wrote an article, which appeared at [www.nu.or.id](http://www.nu.or.id), shares this view. According to him, the term *ustadh* as widely used in Indonesia is a deviation from its original meaning. He suggested that the term be brought back to its original meaning 'in order [for us] not to be easily cheated and charmed [by that title]' (*tidak mudah tertipu dan terlena*). He said,

'... the title *ustadh* can be given through a number of non-instant scientific qualifications... being able to preach is not a qualification needed in order to become an *ustadh*, *kyai*, let alone *ulama* ... There are other terms which are suitable for *penceramah* like *al-muballigh*, *al-da'i* or *al-khatib*.'<sup>26</sup>

Behind the controversy over the role of *ustadhs* is the contestation of religious authority. It problematizes who has the right to speak for Islam. This debate over the authority of non-religious expert is not new. In the medieval period of Islam, the emergence of popular preachers and storytellers troubled orthodox Muslim scholars consisting of Muslim jurists and traditionists like Ibn al-Jauzi (d. 1336), Zain al-Din al-'Iraqi (d. 1404), and Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d. 1505).<sup>27</sup> They criticized popular preachers and

storytellers, among other things, of making dissimulation and dishonesty by transmitting untrustworthy *hadiths*, and, thus, engaging in *bid'ah* (forbidden religious innovation) (Berkey 2001: 28-30). As Berkey (2001: 89 & 95) noted, such a controversy over popular preachers raised a central issue of what was and what was not Islamic, and who had the right to define it. In other words, contestation over religious authority was at the heart of the controversy. This is also true for the current discussion of religious preachers in Indonesia.

A brief note should be made about the academic titles, which are basically different from the religious ones. Many Salafi radio preachers graduated from Saudi universities. However, academic titles like *Lc* or MA (Masters) or Dr (Doctor) are not commonly used among Salafi preachers in Surakarta. Such titles are also very rarely used for other radio preachers. Among them is Ahmad Sukino. He is commonly introduced as '*Al-Ustadh Drs.* (*Doctorandus*) Ahmad Sukino. It is interesting that he never uses the title '*haji*' although he has performed Islamic pilgrimage (*hajj*). In many occasions, he said that '*haji*' is not a title but a religious duty. There is no information why he prefers to be called *Drs* next to *Al-Ustadh* than *haji*. However, it can be understood that it indicates that his religious authority is not derived from such traditional institutions like *pesantren* and *madrasah*. His stance toward the appellation *kyai* is rather cynical. He often equates it with *Kyai Kebo Slamet*, a sacred water buffalo in the Surakarta kingdom, and *dukun* (magician) commonly called *kyai-kun*, meaning *kyai* plus *dukun*.

### 3. 2 Brief profiles of some radio preachers

In Surakarta, radio preachers can be categorized into the three types of authority (*kyai*, *ustadh* and *habib*) distinguished above. While the term *ustadh* is used by all *dakwah* radio stations, *kyai* and *habib* are only used by *dakwah* radios ideologically tied with

NU like Al-Hidayah FM, RBA FM, and Assunnah FM. Many *habib* preachers have given sermons on Al-Hidayah FM. They even played an important role in the development of Al-Hidayah FM and its umbrella organization, Majelis Al-Hidayah. While *kyais'* educational backgrounds can be clearly identified with *pesantren*, those of *ustadhs* varies. Some *ustadhs* were educated in *pesantrens*, while others were not. Some went to university, others not. *Habibs* have gone through all kinds of educations. In terms of gender, female preachers who give sermons on the radio in Surakarta are still rare. This fact is somewhat surprising. As far as my information goes, up to now only MH FM and RDS (HIZ) FM have had female teachers (*ustadhahs*). The reason of the scarcity of female radio preachers is not always gender segregation. Some *dakwah* radio stations like MTA FM, MH FM, RBA FM, and Mentari FM employ female broadcasters. This means that the female voice on the radio is not a problem. According to a broadcaster of RDS FM (now HIZ FM), a female guest can visit the RDS FM studio if she is accompanied by her *mahram* (a male relative).<sup>28</sup> MTA FM frequently invited female guests to share their religious experience in the *Hikmah* or *Silaturrehaim* (sic) program. In this situation, a female broadcaster would lead the programs. None of the Salafi radio stations in the city has a female preacher, although they have no problem with the female voice broadcasted on radio. In the interactive programs, they often get questions from female listeners. This is in line with the Salafi view as, for instance, hold by Salih al-'Uthaimin (1997: 268-70) that women's voices are not part of their *aurat*.

Below are the brief biographical accounts of some radio preachers in order to portray their socio-religious background in Surakarta.

### 3.2.1 Kyai Abdul Karim Ahmad

Kyai Abdul Karim Ahmad is the director of Pondok Pesantren

Al-Zayyadi. He was born on 21 April 1964. His father, Ahmad Musthofa, is the founder of Pondok Pesantren Al-Qur'any, Mangkuyudan, Surakarta. He received his early education in Pesantren Takmir Al-Islam in the same city. In 1971, he continued his study in Pondok Pesantren Tebuireng in Jombang, East Java, but only for one year. He then returned to Surakarta to study at Pondok Pesantren Al-Muayyad, Mangkuyudan, Surakarta for three years. Subsequently, he went to study in Pondok Pesantren Krapyak from 1980 to 1986. He is well known for his *dakwah* activities through Jamuro (Jamaah Muji Rosul, Congregation for Praising the Prophet) which he established in 2005. As its name indicates, Jamuro is known for its *salawat* chanting events, which are also broadcasted on Al-Hidayah FM. Abdul Karim Ahmad has a close relationship with Joko Widodo (well-known as Jokowi), the then mayor of Surakarta (present President of Indonesia). As he himself acknowledged, this resulted in Jamuro's success in mobilizing a huge number of Muslims at each of its *salawat* events. In 2012, he refused to be nominated as a candidate for vice-mayor of Surakarta, and decided instead to continue his *dakwah* activities.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.2.2 Habib *Novel*

Habib Novel's full name is Naufal bin Muhammad al 'Aydrus, but he is better known as Habib Novel. He was born on 27 July 1975 in Surakarta.<sup>30</sup> He went to the primary and secondary schools at the Diponegoro Foundation for Islamic Education and he went to SMA 3 for his high school, all in Surakarta. His initial interest was not in Islamic disciplines, but in computer science. He wanted to become a computer technician (*ahli computer*). As he himself acknowledged, he never thought of becoming an *ustadh*. His desire to go to the university did not materialize because he did not get his mother's consent. He decided to study in Pesantren Darul Lughah wad Dakwah in Pasuruan, East Java, led by Hasan

Baharun. He described that he did not know the Arabic language at all until he learnt it in the *pesantren*. He spent seven months in this *pesantren* to enhance his Islamic knowledge, and then he returned to Surakarta. After that, he became a preacher. He established a *majlis taklim* called Majlis Ilmu dan Dzikir Ar-Raudhah through which he regularly organized sermons, which are broadcasted on Al-Hidayah FM and Ar-Raudhah's streaming radio. Besides the *majlis*, he wrote and published many books on Islam, among them: *Umat Bertanya Ulama Menjawab* (The Ummat Asks, the Ulama Answers), *Ahlul Bid'ah Hasanah* (People of Good Innovation), *Shalawat Jalan Selamat* (Salawat, the Safe Way), *Secangkir Kopi Hikmah* (A coffee cup of Wisdom), and many others. His sermons are also available on VCDs which are sold to members of his congregation and to others. He can be considered a media savvy preacher. He initiated the Aswaja Centre where Muslims can pose their questions about Islam.

### 3.2.3 Ustadh Soni Parsono

Ustadh Soni Parsono was born on 17 November 1975 in Blora, Central Java. Up to now, little is known about his early education but he received his formal education at a secondary high school (SMA).<sup>31</sup> He moved to Surakarta for business. While doing business, he was actively engaged in various *majlis taklim* run by *habibs* like Habib Syech and Habib Novel. He also studied Islam with *kyais* like Ahmad Baidhowi. His connection with *habibs* and *kyais* stimulated him to establish a *majlis*, which he called Majlis Khotmil Quran (MKQ) Al-Hidayah in 2008. Together with *habibs*, *kyais* and *ustadhs*, he extended the *majlis* so that it had many branches in Surakarta and surroundings.<sup>32</sup> He was not trained in Islamic disciplines. Ahmad Baidhowi, one of his teachers described his early study of Islam in Surakarta by stating that 'he was unable to read Arabic, but now he can understand it little (better).'<sup>33</sup> Novel and Ahmad Baidhowi described him as an



enthusiastic and energetic young man in *dakwah* activities.<sup>34</sup> His role in *dakwah* development in Surakarta is inseparable from Al-Hidayah FM which he founded in 2008. He also founded Pesantren Darul Quran in Sukoharjo. His relation with State officials made him an important figure, despite his non-partisan affiliation. In 2014, he received an honorific title from the *Yayasan Kasultanan Keraton Pajang* in Surakarta.

#### 3.2.4 Ustadh Parsono Agus Waluyo

Ustadh Parsono Agus Waluyo was born on 12 October 1976 in Karanganyar, Central Java. He had his primary and secondary education in his hometown. Between 1994 and 1995, while working, he was actively studying Islam in MTA (Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an). As he himself acknowledged, he started to know Islam more deeply when he joined MTA.<sup>35</sup> Before that, members of ISKAR (Ikatan Santri Karanganyar, Association of Santris in Karanganyar) persuaded him to study at a pondok pesantren. However, he was interested to join MTA instead. Only, after two years he changed mind. He decided to continue to study Islam in Pondok Pesantren Ringin Agung in Pare, Kediri, East Java for almost three years (1996-1998). For him, at the beginning, *pesantren* culture was much at odds with his previous religious background. From 1998 to 1999, he spent time to study Islam in a pondok pesantren in Magetan, and one year (1999-2000) in Ponorogo, East Java. After studying in some pondok pesantrens, he was actively involved in Muslim organizations like the DDI (Council of Islamic Dakwah) in Surabaya and the NU in Karanganyar. As he told me, he once studied at a university in Madiun, but he never finished his studies. He is a technician by training, whose expertise is radio technics. He established an amateur radio station when he was still in a pondok pesantren. He founded Pitutur Luhur Management with its two sections, Sima Antena and Sima Grafika. This management also has an amateur radio station that is usually called Radio Pitutur

Luhur. Through the radio, Parsono Agus Waluyo established himself as an important local preacher. His structural position in the Karanganyar branch of the NU shaped his position as a religious public figure.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2.5 Ustadh *Ahmad Sukino*

Ustadh Ahmad Sukino was born on 27 October 1948.<sup>37</sup> He went to PGA (Training for Religious Teachers), and continued his study at the Tarbiyah Faculty of Islamic Institute of the Muhammadiyah (IAIM). He was active in several Muslim modernist organizations like HMI (Association of Muslim Students), and IPM (Association of Muhammadiyah Youth). After finishing his PGA study, he taught at a Muhammadiyah primary school in Makam Haji, Kartasura. Subsequently, he became a teacher at a secondary school (SMP) in Kartasura, teaching religious subjects, while completing his study at the IAIM. Although born into a modernist Masyumi and Muhammadiyah family, he was interested in syncretic Javanese traditions. He believed in magic (*perdukunan*) and other practices. He became a member of BSTEPA (Barisan Syuhada Tega Pati, Front of Martyrs Ready to Die), a self-defense arts school that also taught mystics. In his early career, he was not interested in religion until he joined the Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an (MTA) led by Abdullah Thufail. Since then, his religious enthusiasm increased. After Thufail's death in 1992, he was appointed as MTA leader. Under his leadership, the MTA became widely known to the public outside Surakarta. He turned into a charismatic leader whose image was built to a large extent on his life story. He often tells his congregations that he is a former *dukun* (magician), and a former perpetrator of un-Islamic practices like holding *slametan* (communal feast).

### 3.2.6 Ustadh *Abu Ahmad Rahmat*

Ustadh Abu Ahmad Rahmat was born in Gawok, Sukoharjo. After finishing senior high school (SMA), he studied under Ja'far

Umar Thalib, the former commander of Laskar Jihad, in Degolan, Yogyakarta. As he told me, he spent three years there.<sup>38</sup> After that he went to Peshawar in Pakistan. There he spent one year to study *hadith*.<sup>39</sup> Back in Surakarta, he joined the Al-Madinah Foundation, founded on 30 September 1996 by a number of Salafi preachers.<sup>40</sup> The foundation organized Islamic education at the primary and secondary levels. In addition, it established Al-Madinah FM as its *dakwah* medium. Abu Ahmad Rahmat's sermons are regularly aired on Al-Madinah FM, including those on Quranic exegesis.

### 3.2.7 Ustadh Kholid Syamhudi

Ustadh Kholid Syamhudi was born in Lampung, South Sumatra on 12 April 1972.<sup>41</sup> He studied nuclear technics at the faculty of technics at Gadjah Mada University (UGM) in Yogyakarta, from 1990 to 1992. In 1993, he studied at Dar al-Hadith al-Khairiyah in Pakistan. In 1994 he started yet another study at the Hadith Faculty of the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia where he finished in 1999. He learned with prominent Salafi scholars like Rabi' b. Hadi al-Madkhali, Muhammad b. Hadi al-Madkhali and 'Abd al-Muhsin al-'Abbad. After studying abroad, he returned to Indonesia and taught at several Salafi pesantrens, including Pesantren Jamilurrahman in Yogyakarta (2000-2001) and Pesantren Imam Bukhori in Surakarta till 2006. He was and is actively involved in *dakwah* activities. He is the director of Ma'had Ibnu Abbas in Sragen, head of the preparation program for future preachers (*i'dad al-du'at*) at Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah, and member of the editorial board of the *Assunnah* magazine in Surakarta. He is known for his *SMS Berjawab* program broadcast on Suara Quran FM. In this program, he answered listeners' questions on Islam. He is a media savvy preacher whose sermons have been spread through the Internet, Salafi radio and television stations, and others.

#### 4 Claiming authority: A case study of Ahmad Sukino

This chapter begins with a public controversy over the sermons of the radio preacher, Ahmad Sukino, the leader of MTA. This was not the only controversial case caused by Sukino's radio sermons in places outside Surakarta. Other cases occurred in other places like Purworejo and Blora, Central Java. In fact, the story of the controversy itself started long before, before Ahmad Sukino's *Jihad Pagi* sermons that were aired on HIZ FM, and MTA FM had been established. The director of HIZ FM, Yanni Rusmanto,<sup>42</sup> told me the story of a student (*santri*) of a certain *pesantren* in Sragen, who, after asking a question by phone, was dissatisfied with Ahmad Sukino's reply. The *santri* thought that Sukino had insulted his *pesantren*. His mentor (a *kyai*) intervened and he tried to get some clarification from Sukino by calling the HIZ FM, but he failed. According to Rusmanto, this was the first conflict between MTA and NU members fueled by his radio sermons.

In this section, I discuss the controversial figure of Ahmad Sukino further. Ahmad Sukino (and MTA) is an important case study for several reasons. One is that Ahmad Sukino may be considered as the media savvy preacher *par excellence*, whose power of speech rests much on modern media, especially radio. So far, various forms of media have been used to level criticism against the MTA, ranging from books, radio broadcasts, to the Internet-based platforms like YouTube, Facebook and blogs. Although MTA has also benefited from all these media, the radio is the most powerful medium to counter its opponents. The second is Ahmad Sukino's success in making MTA widely known to the public at the national level through the use of the radio medium. As Jinan (2013: 138) has noted, since MTA FM's establishment in 2007, the number of MTA's members has increased by up to 100% in various regions. In 2013, MTA has 430 branches and representatives. Of them, 128 were present at the *Silaturahmi Nasional* (National Assembly)



Ustadh Ahmad Sukino. *Photo reproduced from the book cover of Kumpulan Khutbah 2 (2012)*

held on 15 September 2013, in Senayan stadium, Jakarta, which was attended by Vice-President Budiono who represented President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono who was unable not attend. This moment was proof of Sukino's success in bringing MTA to the national level.

The last reason is that Ahmad Sukino (and MTA) represents a particular form of authority that aspires to reclaiming the victory of pristine Islam exclusively

based on the Qur'an (and the prophetic Sunnah). He shares this aspiration with other puritan and modernist groups like the Muhammadiyah, but he also disagrees with them in the way in which this return to pristine Islam should be done. As Jinan noted (2013: 275), unlike the Muhammadiyah, MTA's call for a return to the Qur'an (and the Sunnah) is not accompanied with a call for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning). For the Muhammadiyah, this call should be done by way of *ijtihad* and *tajdid* (renewal). It also disagrees with Salafi groups who claim that the interpretation of the past pious ancestors, called the *salaf al-ummah*, is the only valid one. As I will show later, his appeal to a return to the Qur'an (and the prophetic Sunnah) benefits much from the one-way communication model the radio medium offers. The last reason is that in terms of its leadership, MTA adheres to the *imamah* system, which means that the highest authority is in the hands of an *imam* whom MTA members should obey. As an *imam*, Ahmad Sukino has the exclusive right to engage in *ijtihad* in Islamic

matters and other members are not allowed to do so (Jama'an 2003: 63; Jinan 2011: 592). Although other MTA teachers have also become MTA FM radio preachers, Ahmad Sukino is the most authoritative. His religious charisma excels other MTA teachers. Other *dakwah* radio stations do not have this kind of centralized authoritative preacher.

In analysing Ahmad Sukino's personality as a radio preacher, I start with his call to a return to true Islam as the basis of his moral authority. Following Scannell (1996: 164), the 'thereness' (being there) of a radio preacher is in his voice. In other words, his voice is his presence in public. Therefore, the next focus is on how his voice that transported those messages to the radio and then to the listeners actually played a role in the construction of his authority.

#### *4. 1 Return to the true Islam: Moral authority*

The aforementioned controversy over his sermons indicates that two types of authority, *kyai* and *habib*, competed with an *ustadh* in their claims to religious legitimacy. Both *kyai* and *habib* expressed their deep concern with the teaching of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* that they considered in danger of the newly emerging authority of an *ustadh*'s lack of intellectual credentials. Ahmad Sukino is not a product of the traditional education of *pesantren* or *madrasah*. His supposed incompetence in Arabic has been criticized not only by NU members, but also by other groups like Salafis and other individuals. Still, his intellectual shortcoming is not the reason for his followers to abandon him. His seemingly ambiguity has actually become a source of some kind of power. On the one hand, his sermons are fraught with Islamic issues commonly categorized as *khilafiyat* (differences of opinion) like reading *usali* before *salat* (praying), praying aloud, praying for the deceased, and such like. On the other, he always calls to avoid debates on religious matters. His dialogical preaching method is one of the attractive aspects of his sermons. By using this method, he offered a new sort of experience

in the study of Islam in the midst of the monological way of preaching dominant in Islamic public gatherings. At the time of my fieldwork, I often heard that his congregations were amazed not only by his convincing answers but also by his honesty in admitting his limited knowledge in certain things. He only answered questions when he knew their textual bases (*dalil*).

Above all, the strongest aspect of his preaching is his moral appeal that he claims to be deeply rooted in the Qur'an (and the Sunnah).<sup>43</sup> The return to the Qur'an (and the Sunnah) can be framed within Islamic revival movements. The MTA is one of the Muslim organizations that subscribe to this revivalism.<sup>44</sup> How should Muslims return to the Qur'an? MTA's answer is clear, but problematic. MTA's answer is neither to return to the interpretations of the four Sunni schools of law nor to the interpretations of the *al-salaf al-salih*. In constructing his authority, Ahmad Sukino never claims to be a follower of any particular Islamic school of thought (*madhhab*), nor does he claim to interpret the Qur'an. He never declares himself as either Sunni or Shi'i. He claims to follow the Qur'an (and the Sunnah) only. For him, the founders of the Islamic schools of thought (*imam madhhab*) can error, while the Qur'an is always true.<sup>45</sup> In addition, according to Sukino, the *madhhab*'s founders never asked people to follow them. Instead, they asked them to abandon their wrong understanding of Islam. In the *Jihad Pagi* session of 20 January 2013,<sup>46</sup> Ahmad Sukino discussed the statement of the founder of the Hanafi School of law, Abu Hanifah (d. 767), that says, 'It is not allowed for anyone to take our opinion if he/she does not know where we took it from.'<sup>47</sup> He explained that this means that we have to know the sources behind what Abu Hanifah said. If it comes from the Qur'an (and the Sunnah), we are allowed to follow it. Otherwise, we are prohibited from following his *fatwa*. Other *madhhab* founders (Malik ibn Anas, al-Shafi'i, and Ahmad ibn Hanbal) were also discussed in this session. Ahmad Sukino stated that the MTA does not follow any one of the



four *madhhabs*, and that the *madhhab* of the MTA is the Qur'an and the Sunnah.<sup>48</sup> According to him, the reason for this is that they forbid Muslims to follow them.<sup>49</sup> His call for a return to the Qur'an (and the Sunnah) by rejecting all other authorities is problematic because it raises the questions as to how and who Ahmad Sukino considers himself (interpreter or not?), and whether it is possible to understand the Qur'an without any method and the use of other sources.

Ahmad Sukino's call for a return to the Qur'an can be better understood as a moral appeal rather than an epistemological issue. In response to his opponents, he said that he was more interested in moral issues than in epistemological ones. For instance, when Marzuki Mustamar, the *kyai* mentioned above criticized him of being ignorant of *kitab kuning* (Islamic classic literature), his response was that it was necessary for Muslims to follow the Qur'an as their highest source of reference. Moreover, his responses were heavily loaded with moral judgments like '*munafiq*' (hypocrite), '*fitnah*' (slander), '*hati kotor*' (dirty heart), '*dusta*' (lie), '*bohong*' (lie), '*dengki*' (envy) and the like. In line with this, instead of reacting to the criticism on his lack of erudition, he focused on other issues the *kyai* raised. For instance, he rejected the allegations of allowing Muslims to eat dog meat, of banning *tahlilan*, and others, since, for him, they were based more on *fitnah* than on facts. By focusing on moral issues like *fitnah*, he was able to articulate strong judgements of his opponents and they were strongly supported by his proponents.

So far, three books have been written with the special aim of correcting his Islamic views. One is entitled *Mengenali pemahaman Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an* (Knowing the Islamic understanding of MTA) written by Abu Fauzan Azhar (2012). In this book, the writer tries to introduce some of MTA's religious views while correcting some of them. The second book is *Antara akal sehat dan hawa nafsu (Tinjauan syar'i terhadap MTA)* (Between sound



reasoning and desire: *Ashari'ah*-based perspective on MTA, 2012) written by a Salafi teacher from Boyolali in which he criticizes various methodological problems of MTA's interpretation. The last book is *Meluruskan doktrin MTA: Kritik atas dakwah Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an di Solo* (Straightening MTA's Doctrine: A Criticism of the Propagation of Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an in Solo) (2012), written by Muhammad Nur Hidayat. The book aims to correct MTA's doctrinal views and its preaching method. It is interesting that Ahmad Sukino rarely reacted to the conceptual and methodological issues that these books problematized. Rather, he was much more concerned with issues he considered causing '*fitnah*' for MTA. It is understandable that Muhammad Nur Hidayat's book has triggered Ahmad Sukino to review it critically, since it contains not only Islamic legal issues, but it also discusses issues pertaining to MTA that, according to its writer, spread among society, like the conflicts between NU and MTA members in several regions. It is different from the previous two books that only discuss MTA's Islamic views. It has to be noted that the writer is affiliated with the NU, many religious practices of which were criticized by MTA.

#### *4. 2 Radio-mediated authority: Voice and communication*

It is important to understand radio's role in the construction of religious authority. Different from television, radio rests exclusively on aural data. Thus, specific attention should be given to voice and sound as 'material culture' (Tacchi 1997). Radio is the technological medium that emerged from sound reproduction processes. Scholars have different definitions of radio. Some define it as the separation of sound from its source, while others perceive it as the split between the original and the copy. For Jonathan Sterne (2006: 22) sound reproduction means 'turn(ing) sound into something else and that something else back into sound.' Brian Larkin (2008: 50) points out that the peculiar nature of the radio

medium rests on 'the separation of sound from source, of voice from the body.' The religious authority of a radio preacher can also be seen from the perspective of sound reproduction, since the authority that we are talking about here is mediated through the radio medium, the voice that is already separated from its source, from the body of a radio preacher.

In addition to voice, it is important to consider the nature of the communication of radio broadcasting. John B. Thompson (1995: 4) puts forward that the use of communication media creates new forms of action and interaction. He characterizes radio-mediated communication as a mediated-quasi-interaction, which is oriented towards an indefinite range of potential recipients, and it is monological (1995: 82-87).<sup>50</sup> A radio sermon is a mediated sermon in which the communication between a preacher and his listeners can be dialogical and oriented toward a certain group of listeners as in interactive programs. As a kind of communication, a radio sermon can be dialogical at the time of production in the sense that it is a dialogical sermon in a studio or in a venue of an event. However, at the time of reception it is monological. The flow of information is predominantly one-way. The monological nature of the radio medium is obvious for the fact that the only data it provides are sound and noise. This has a further consequence for the way a listener receives the data. In this regard, the specific quality of the voice lies in its ability to touch. Touch, as R. Murray Schafer (1994) said, is the most personal sense. To touch means to enter the most personal space of a person. It is interesting in this case, that Schafer emphasizes hearing rather than speaking. He said, 'Hearing is a way of touching at a distance and the intimacy of the first sense is fused with sociability whenever people gather together to hear something special' (Schafer 1994: 11). This implies that hearing is more than a passive act. It is an active act. What is important to emphasize is that hearing and listening are purposive acts (Schafer 1994: 71). Thus, hearing and listening to

the radio is done on purpose. This is regardless of its secondary nature: hearing and listening to the radio while doing something else. Of course this is not unique to radio. Other media like Walkmans and telephones are also sound-based. It is a general feature of what Schafer has called 'soundscape'.

In this section, I shall examine how the voice has been pivotal in mediating Islamic authority. As Schulz has noted, 'the voice serves as a principal point of reconnaissance between a religious leader or teacher and his audiences.' Studying the emergence of female radio preachers in Mali, Schulz (2012a: 25) asserts that the voices of these preachers are important 'to understand how their followers become attuned to and validate their moral lessons as valuable religious instruction.' She also puts forward that the preachers' voices play an important role in enhancing the quality of their religious authority. Her study of Sharif Haidara, a spiritual leader in Mali, demonstrates that Haidara's voice enhanced his charismatic leadership (Schulz 2003: 161). Schulz has also studied female radio preachers in Mali whose radio-mediated female voices generated insecurities among their listeners. Schulz demonstrated that their authority lies in the disembodiment of their voice, the inseparability of their voice. In Surakarta, as I mentioned above, the female voice is not a big issue. However, this does not mean that his voice is not important for a preacher. As I will show soon, his voice is crucial to such a radio preacher as Ahmad Sukino.

As a charismatic leader, one of the strongest qualities of Ahmad Sukino's sermons rests on his voice as clearly expressed by some of his listeners. Asked why he liked to listen to MTA FM, a male listener from Brebes, Central Java who came to the *Jihad Pagi* on 10 March 2013, answered, 'his voice is joyful, the Qur'an is clear. [He only uses] the valid *hadith*. [He provides] no weak *hadith*.'<sup>51</sup> A female listener of MTA FM from Bondowoso, East Java who came to the *Jihad Pagi* of 8 September 2003, expressed her feelings as follows, 'Every morning, midday, and after 8 o'clock I always turn

on (my radio) ... why? I listen to the *kajian* (lecture) of *Ustadh* Sukino. I like to do that. *Ustadh* Sukino's voice is melodious.<sup>52</sup> Another female listener from Jakarta who came to the *Jihad Pagi* of 1 September 2013, was impressed by the loudness of his voice (*suaranya keras*). This she felt when she first listened to Sukino's lecture. Because of his voice, she always likes to listen to his sermons. She said, 'I heard it directly *Pak Ustadh*'s voice. His voice is loud. What I remember [from him] is [his use of the words] *apa lagi?* (what else?).'<sup>53</sup> A male listener who attended the *Jihad Pagi* of 14 October 2012 expressed his hope that Ahmad Sukino's successor would have the same qualities: a beautiful voice, nice to listen to, entertaining, and full of patience. In the *Silaturrahmi* program of the same date, a male listener, 74 years old, from Banjarnegara, Central Java, acknowledged that so far he had never directly seen Ahmad Sukino's face. He only listened to his voice. This made him wonder what the owner of the voice, Ahmad Sukino, looked like. According to him, Ahmad Sukino's voice was *atos* which, in the Banyumas dialect of the Javanese language, literally means 'tough'. He imagined that if Ahmad Sukino's voice was 'tough', his should have a huge body. A female listener from Pemalang, Central Java, came to the *Jihad Pagi* of 19 January 2014. After listening to his radio sermon for several months, she became curious to see Ahmad Sukino directly. She told me that before she saw a picture of Ahmad Sukino on the Internet, she had imagined that physically Ahmad Sukino was huge and tall. In Javanese, she said, '*Ketoke wonge gedhe dhuwur*' (I think he is huge and tall). These listeners apparently related their listening experience to their desire to directly see Ahmad Sukino's physical appearance, because of the entertaining quality of his voice. A convert listener who came to the *Jihad Pagi* on 25 November 2012 acknowledged that his heart had melted (*mencair*) after he had listened to Ahmad Sukino's sermons for about one and half year. He said, '... by listening to (MTA) radio FM, my heart became melted because of your words.'

Their evaluation of the voice quality resonates with their evaluation of the spiritual meaning of the voice. Some listeners of MTA FM related their listening experience to gaining God's guidance (*hidayah*). For them, *hidayah* can only be achieved by a pure heart (*hati yang bersih*). A male listener and member of MTA FM I met on 20 December 2012 made a distinction between those listening with a pure heart and those without, between *ati* and *akal budi*. Listening with a pure heart is listening with *ati*. *Ati* is a Javanese word, which means heart or liver. However, *ati* used here refers to the intuitive faculty or deep awareness through which a person can receive God's truth. By contrast, *akal budi* means reason, or mind, or cognitive faculty, which is only able to understand the surface of the divine truth. For him, in order to receive God's deep truth, people should listen with their *ati* and not only with their *akal budi*. As I will discuss later, Ahmad Sukino himself emphasized the importance for his listener to have a *hati yang jernih* (a clean heart) in order to be able to accept the truth of the Qur'an that he brings to them. This also resonates with the touching quality of his voice. A female listener of MTA FM I often met in *Jihad Pagi* sessions described how her heart became open (to receive *hidayah*) when she listened to Ahmad Sukino's sermons. Every time, she felt as if he addressed her and told her about her mistakes in practicing Islam. This opened her awareness (*membuka kesadaran*) of what she should improve in her religious life. A Javanese listener who lives in Padang, West Sumatra, came to the *Jihad Pagi* on 27 February 2013. Interviewed in the *Silaturahmi* session, he acknowledged that before listening to MTA FM, he always rejected his friends' invitations to the truth, and he changed to easily accept it thereafter.

The admiration of some listeners to the voice quality of Ahmad Sukino is not something divinely given, but constructed. He himself constructed it in such a way that his voice mattered in his sermons. The following subsections are to understand how he constructed his voice quality.

#### 4. 3 *Listening with a pure heart*

Ahmad Sukino's moral appeal has further consequences for his listeners. Since everything that Ahmad Sukino delivers comes from the Qur'an (and the Sunnah), the messages gain a sacred status that listeners cannot deny. All they need to do is to accept them as the truth (*kebenaran*). The truth cannot be accepted without a clean, pure heart (*hati yang bersih* or *hati yang jernih*). The denial of the truth comes only from a dirty heart (*hati yang kotor*). Listening with a pure heart is the way of getting to know the truth. In identifying his listeners, Ahmad Sukino emphasizes that his sermons are addressed to all people just as the Qur'an was revealed to all humankind. He said, 'The Qur'an, when read, touches both good and bad people, though unintentionally ... Listening to the radio is also just like that'. Consequently, some listeners accept it, others not. In line with his emphasis on morality, he classifies his listeners into two types. One type consists of 'good people' (*orang yang baik*). He characterizes them by referring to Q. 8: 2<sup>54</sup> that states that real believers are those whose faith increases when the Qur'an is being read to them. These listeners will soon repent to God after listening to the Qur'an. They 'realize [their mistakes], and soon change their behavior, following the true path' (*sadar, segera berubah, mengikuti jalan yang benar*).

The second type comprises of 'ill-hearted' (*hatinya berpenyakit*) people. Ahmad Sukino said, 'The Qur'an explained it as such. If you become more ill after having been touched (by the Qur'an) and more disappointed, your heart is ill. If (your heart is) not cured immediately, (you) will die in infidelity.'<sup>55</sup> As can be seen from this statement, the consequence of listening with a 'dirty heart' is not only that a listener will never understand the messages, but that he also will die in infidelity. In a sermon delivered on 9 January 2011, Ahmad Sukino gave an example of this type of listener by saying: 'Also listening to the (MTA) radio. A *kyai* who listened to

the radio (said) ‘my heart is depressed ... my ears painful’. For a justification, he cited Q. 2: 10,<sup>56</sup> which deals with the people whose hearts became painful when listening to the Qur’an. To further justify his classification, Ahmad Sukino quoted a popular *hadith* that commands a Muslim either to be ‘knowledgeable’ (*‘aliman*) or ‘a learner’ (*muta‘alliman*) or ‘a listener’ (*mustami‘an*) or ‘a lover of religious knowledge’ (*muhibban*), and prohibits him to be neither of them.<sup>57</sup> To understand his sermons, listeners should have a pure heart (*hati bersih*), otherwise, they will never understand his sermons. ‘Your dirty heart doesn’t understand’ (*hatimu kotor tidak paham*).

In the *Ustad On Air* program of MTA FM of 24 January 2013,<sup>58</sup> and in the last section of the *Jihad Pagi* of 8 February 2015,<sup>59</sup> a special counter-criticism was raised to former MTA member, Bambang Surono, one of the founders of the blog page ‘Mantan Siswa MTA’ (Former MTA Student). One of the interesting critical points he made was that although Surono *ngaji* (studied) at MTA for more than twenty years, he did not really understand what he had learnt. According to Sukino, this was because he had a ‘dirty heart’ (*hati kotor*). To uphold this, he cited Q. 56: 76 that says, ‘*la yamassuhu illa-l-mutahharun*’, which means, ‘Which none shall touch but those who are clean’. He further said:

‘(The success of) *ngaji* does not depend on its duration. Even when it is long, if your heart is dirty, it means also *la yamassuhu illa-l-mutahharun*. (Your heart) cannot be touched by the Qur’an, because the Qur’an is clean and pure. A dirty one cannot be touched by the Qur’an, cannot be touched. 20 years, how come he still does not understand?’<sup>60</sup>

Such listening with a pure heart demands self-discipline in order to understand Ahmad Sukino’s radio sermons. In practice, most MTA FM listeners took a long time to understand and accept his radio sermons. Some of them rejected them at the beginning, but later accepted them.

#### 4. 4 *Finding the source of the voice*

The further consequence of Ahmad Sukino's moral appeal is that listeners should find the original source when they fail to understand the messages of his sermons. In this respect, the direct return to the Qur'an (and the Sunnah) gets its very literal articulation: listeners have to come to the MTA or to Ahmad Sukino in order to directly find the original messages. In many *Jihad Pagi* sessions, Ahmad Sukino asked his listeners to find the *sumber suara* (the source of the voice) if they do not understand or misunderstand what he had delivered. On 30 December 2007, for instance, in the *Jihad Pagi* session, a listener (who was absent in the *Jihad Pagi* but apparently somewhere else listening to the radio) wrote a letter to ask Ahmad Sukino the following:

'If I listen to the answer-questions of the *Ahad Pagi* (i.e the *Jihad Pagi*), I often become aware of what I did not know before. But, if there is a question of *ibadah* (worship) and the worship has *tuntutanannya* (its guidance), you (sometimes) do not read its textual basis (*dalilnya*). We are not allowed to worship without a clear textual basis. For that reason, when I want to worship, I am in doubt whether to do it or not. Therefore, may I ask you to read the *dalil* in order for me to be more firm in doing it?'

In response, Ahmad Sukino said,

'That's why, if you *ngaji*, don't jump up (to) the question-answer session. Come earlier and listen to the reading of the *Brosur*. The *Brosur* is complete with the *dalil*. ... So, come to the *Brosur*. If (the *dalil*) is not in the *Brosur*, I tell you the (related) Qur'anic verse, this the (related) *hadith*. If you ask me to explain (everything) that is not written in the *Brosur* while you (only) listen to the radio, it is impossible (for me to explain it). Thus, to be more intensive, do not be satisfied only with listening to the radio. Even if I read it (on the radio), you will not be able to write it down. Come here on a Sunday morning like this. All the *dalil* are in the *Brosur*. To more deepen (your



understanding of) other subjects, join the branch (of the MTA) ... There (in the branch) what may be not mentioned in the *Brosur* will be provided.'

It is clear from this answer that to really understand the messages of his sermons it is not enough for listeners to listen to the radio only. They also need to read the *Brosur*, a pamphlet containing Qur'anic verses and *hadiths* related to certain topics that will be discussed in the *Jihad Pagi* session. If they still do not understand them, they need to come to the *Jihad Pagi* to get his explanation. This is the literal articulation of finding the source of the voice, which is Ahmad Sukino himself or MTA. From this, we can understand precisely how Ahmad Sukino exerts his power over his listeners.

His use of his power over his opponents can also be understood from his demand of 'finding the source of the voice'. Ahmad Sukino always invited his opponents to come to MTA (or the *Jihad Pagi*) in order to do *tabayyun* (asking clarification, confirmation). *Tabayyun* is a concept taken from the Qur'an. It is based on Q. 49: 6, which says, 'Oh ye who believe! If a wicked person comes to you with any news, *ascertain the truth* (italic mine), lest ye harm people unwittingly, and afterwards become full of repentance for what ye have done.' In this translation of the verse, *tabayyun* means 'to ascertain the truth'. Following this verse, Ahmad Sukino always asked his opponents to do *tabayyun* by coming directly to the *Jihad Pagi*. Otherwise, they were susceptible to spreading lies (*menyebarkan kebohongan*), making false news (*kabar bohong*), and the like.

The term *tabayyun* is loaded with moral meaning so that failure to do it will result in moral violations. In response to the demonstration in Kudus I mentioned above, for instance, Ahmad Sukino invited the demonstrators to engage in *tabayyun* with each other. He said, 'If fellow Muslims heard news, in accordance with the *tuntunan* (God's rule), (we) do *tabayyun*. Ask clarification first. Don't rely on

information from rumors, while knowing who the members of MTA are, and also where its office is'.<sup>61</sup> *Tabayyun* often becomes a kind of invitation from MTA to its opponents in particular and listeners in general, to correct the religious views that are considered wrong or even deviated. Nevertheless, so far, correction (or even clarification) had never materialized in reality. It is interesting that the MTA praised the *Jihad Pagi* guests from the NU or other figures who once criticized it. Their presence was considered *tabayyun*. *Tabayyun* in this way is an ample manifestation of finding the voice's source. The nature of the power relations between the seeker(s) of the source and the source itself is clearly imbalanced. For MTA, their *tabayyun* confirms MTA's truth, while for the guests themselves it can only mean a *silaturrahim* (maintaining friendship ties) at best and their defeat in debates at worse.

#### 4.5 Dialog or monolog?

As mentioned earlier, the Ahmad Sukino's preaching method is dialogic in nature in the sense that his listeners are free to raise questions. His *Jihad Pagi* and *Ustad On Air* programs broadcast on MTA FM are also dialogic. He often states that if MTA's religious views are wrong, people are invited to come and correct them. Is it really dialogic? And, is correction possible? Before answering these questions, some issues need clarification. The first is about how he deals with religious debates. Ahmad Sukino often warns his congregations not to debate religious matters. For him, religion is not a subject of debate. In the *Jihad Pagi* session of 17 January 2010, he was asked about the meaning of *berbantah tentang agama* (debating religion) as stated in Q. 42: 16, which says, 'But those who dispute concerning Allah after He had been accepted. Futile is their dispute in the sight of their Lord. On them is wrath, and for them will be a penalty terrible.' After giving the context of the verse, Ahmad Sukino stated that the Prophet Muhammad prohibits Muslims from debating about religion. He said,

‘Avoid debate even when you are on the right side. Religion does not need to be debated, (but) to be studied (*dikaji*). After (you) understand, (it is) to be practiced, no need to be debated. What to be debated? Because, the source (of religion) is clear. The Qur’an is the source ... isn’t it? So, the command (of God) is ‘*fa-s’alu ahl al-dhikr in-kuntum la ta’lamun*’.<sup>62</sup> Ask those who understand, the expert, if you do not understand. So, religion must not be debated, but be studied.’

It is clear from the above statement that he distinguishes ‘debate’ from ‘study’. For him, after study, debate, which here seems to mean ‘dispute’ is not allowed. He refers to Q. 8: 46, which reads, ‘And obey Allah and His messenger; And fall into no disputes, lest ye lose heart and your power depart ...’ Explaining the verse, he said, ‘do not dispute or debate, (each other). (If so) you become fearful (of your enemies) and lose your strength...’ It is interesting that after explaining the verse he moved to the difference between *orang yang ngaji* (those studying Islam) and *orang yang tidak ngaji* (those not studying Islam). He said, ‘The first base their views on the Qur’an and the Sunnah, while the other *pokoke* (only follow what people said without knowing the *dalil*).’ The conclusion may be drawn that for Ahmad Sukino, religious debates result from ignorance of the Qur’an. He also clearly takes a negative meaning of debate, which is disputation.

What about discussion (let’s say, not debate) on differences of opinion (*ikhtilafiyat*) concerning religious matters? This is the second issue that needs clarification. Ahmad Sukino believes that as long as the Qur’an is the guide (*pegangan*), differences will be solved. He said, ‘If the Qur’an has become the guide, (even when) you *ngaji* (study) somewhere else, you will share (with others)... because the Qur’an studied in MTA and the Qur’an studied in other places is the same.’ On the one hand, he assumes that the Qur’an has a uniform understanding or interpretation (because of dealing with the same Qur’an). On the other hand,

he suggests that if differences of opinion occur, the principle that should be followed is *lana a'maluna wa-lakum a'malukum* (to us our deeds, and to you yours) and 'mutual respect' (*saling menghormati*). Clearly, Ahmad Sukino's attitudes contradict. If the Qur'an has a uniform understanding, there should be no differences, and mutual respect is needed only when the differences exist. This contradiction clearly emerges from his confusion of the moral ethics of a discussion which needs mutual respect and the problem of understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an which is susceptible to differences. This kind of confusion makes correction impossible. This is the monological nature of Ahmad Sukino's logical reasoning concerning mutual respect and the impossible differences in the interpretation of 'the same Qur'an'. *Tabayyun* is not correction, but only asking for clarification.

The monological nature of Ahmad Sukino's sermons fits in with the quasi-mediated interaction of the radio medium. In reaction to his critics, Ahmad Sukino used radio broadcasting. With this medium, he not only answered the questions but also corrected the mistakes and misunderstandings of his critics. What is interesting here is how a broadcasting medium played an important role in the way Ahmad Sukino made his arguments. With the radio medium, he can align all his arguments with Qur'anic texts. Moreover, the separation of the debates from their original contexts enabled him to orient his arguments to the right direction. In fact, through radio broadcasting, his reactions to his critics are not primarily directed to his opponents, but also to the general listeners. An example is when he was criticized of denying the existence of the Qur'anic doctrine of *shafa'ah* (intercession).<sup>63</sup> For his Salafi opponents, Ahmad Sukino denied *shafa'at* after life in the hereafter.<sup>64</sup> In response to this, he said that the MTA does not deny the existence of *shafa'ah*. For MTA, the Qur'an itself is the *shafa'ah* giver. It becomes a *shafa'ah* giver, when Muslims turn

the Qur'an into their guide and practice its teaching in the world. The *shafa'ah* of the Qur'an can only be attained in the world, not in the hereafter. Following the Qur'an, MTA's main aim can only be achieved in this world and not in the hereafter. What is lacking in Ahmad Sukino's reaction is the original context of the criticism, which was directed against his denial<sup>65</sup> of the possibility for a Muslim who has done a great sin in the world to obtain *shafa'ah* in the hereafter.<sup>66</sup> Referring to Q. 19: 71-72,<sup>67</sup> he stated that those who will enter hell are wrong doers (*orang-orang yang zhalim*) and unbelievers. He added that hell fire has been prepared only for unbelievers as stated in Q. 2: 24.<sup>68</sup> Again, he referred to Q. 39: 61,<sup>69</sup> stating that the righteous will never be touched by hell fire. It is not my intention to decide what the correct interpretation is. Rather, I need to emphasize that the monological nature of this kind of mediated-radio debate only led to quasi-interaction, in this regard between MTA and its critics.

## 5 Concluding remarks

Throughout this chapter, I discussed the multi-layered aspects of religious authority with regard to radio preachers. I also dealt with commodification and Islamization as the driving forces behind the rise of radio preachers. In Surakarta, the emergence of *dakwah* radio stations after the start of the reformation era in 1998 went hand in hand with the efflorescence of the media industry. In this regard, recording technologies such as the production of CDs, VCDs, and DVDs were among the important modern media that played an important role in publicizing the *dakwah* activities run by local preachers in Surakarta. In addition, books and the Internet were also important. This chapter has demonstrated the presence of three types of religious leaders, whose sermons were aired on the radio: *kyais*, *habibs*, and *ustadhs*. These three types of religious authority competed for popularity. *Kyais* as representatives of traditional religious authority maintained their public presence by

taking advantage of the radio. At the same time, *ustadh* became increasingly popular not only among new groups like MTA and Salafis, but also among traditional NU members.

In this chapter, I made a case study of a popular radio preacher, Ahmad Sukino, the leader of the MTA (Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an), in Surakarta. His radio sermons attracted the attention of many Muslims and he was successful in expanding the scope of MTA's *dakwah*, uplifting it from the local to the national level. As I have analyzed, Ahmad Sukino's charismatic personality cannot be detached from his moral appeal for a return to the Qur'an (and the Sunnah). This moral appeal got a very strong resonance among his listeners, among many other things, thanks to radio broadcasting. Mediated by the radio medium, his voice obtained a spiritual power that took God's undeniable truth and guidance (*hidayah*) to his listeners. Separated from its source, his voice obtained the new tactile ability to touch his listeners' hearts. This meant that, when listeners wanted to be able to receive the truth and *hidayah*, they have to listen not only with their ears but also, more importantly, with their pure, clean hearts. This demanded the listeners' self-discipline in order to understand Ahmad Sukino's sermons. As shown above, the monological nature of the radio medium enabled Ahmad Sukino to strengthen his moral arguments.

By using Ahmad Sukino as my example, I emphasized the importance of the voice as a radio phenomenon. However, the voice itself will never be understandable unless language is used. Therefore, in the next chapter, we will move to the empirical details of the voice by focusing on radio sermon languages in order to understand how the voice actually sounds.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> In 2013, I went to Malang with the aim of meeting Kyai Mustamar and confirming the controversy. Unfortunately, he refused the interview after asking me to wait for his return from a preaching journey.

- <sup>2</sup> The sermon can be heard through YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBjhF40uhXo>. It was uploaded by a MTA proponent.
- <sup>3</sup> In Javanese: '*Syeikh Sukino niku kito paringi Bukhari gundulan, tibakne langsung pamit, mboten saget moco*' (Sukino, when we gave him un-vowel *Bukhari*, he could not read it, and went away).
- <sup>4</sup> In Javanese: '*Perkumpulane tiyang goblok sing ngaku pinter*'.
- <sup>5</sup> In Javanese: '*Mulo nek njenengan bingung, lebih baik takok kyai, kei kitab fekih, lakonono. Selesai. Ojo malah mbalik neng nggone Quran, bahaya. Wong Quran-i kandungane macem-macem ...*'
- <sup>6</sup> The video of Sukino's response can be watched at YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87dhDjGp7Fw> (accessed 4 March 2015).
- <sup>7</sup> In Javanese: '*Lha nek kyai-kyai koyo ngono kuwi nduwe pengikut, terus pengikute arep digowo neng ndi cobo?*'
- <sup>8</sup> Q. 6: 153.
- <sup>9</sup> In Indonesian (with inserted Arabic words): '*Kalau Quran mengatakan, justru jangan kamu meleset dari Quran. Wala tattabiussubula fatafarraqa bikum 'an sabilih, kalau kamu mengambil jalan selain al-Quran, kamu tersesat dari jalan yang lurus...*'.
- <sup>10</sup> <http://www.antarajateng.com/detail/index.php?id=57788> (accessed 4 March 2015).
- <sup>11</sup> It is clear from his definition of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* that al-Fauzan tries to stick to its general meaning, which can be attributed to all Muslims who have these two qualifications. However, this definition also fits in with the one formulated in the fatwas of Al-Lajnah al-Da'ima wa-l Buhuth al-Ilmiyah, based on the understanding of Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, the founder of the Wahhabi school. See al-Duwaish 2003, 2: 150-67.
- <sup>12</sup> On KH. Kosim Nurzaha, see Maulana 2014, and <http://www.library.ohiou.edu/indopubs/1996/07/21/0011.html> (accessed 13 August 2014).
- <sup>13</sup> According to Sen and Hill (2007: 101), since the New Order, this has been the legal and economic framework of the radio industry that was resistant to Jakarta centralized control.
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.merdeka.com/peristiwa/mui-solo-minta-lppa-tauhid-bubar-karena-tak-akui-hadits-nabi.html> (accessed 19 September 2014).
- <sup>15</sup> See, for instance, <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3CE55094D026DF0D> (accessed 19 September 2014). This link contains several lectures of Minardi Mursyid on Qur'anic interpretation.
- <sup>16</sup> Muhammad Nur Maulana was born in 1974 in Makasar, South Sulawesi. He is well known for his televised sermons called 'Islam itu Indah' (Islam is beautiful) broadcast on TransTV. For further information on him, see <http://www.ustadmaulana.com/2013/12/ustad-maulana-siapakah-beliau.html> (accessed 19 September 2014).
- <sup>17</sup> A comprehensive discussion on ulama, Sufis, and saints can be found in Keddie 1972.
- <sup>18</sup> Mona Abaza has researched the role of *habibs* in Jakarta in developing *dakwah* centres of *majlis taklim*. See Abaza 2004: 173-202.
- <sup>19</sup> On the *habaib* and their role in contemporary Indonesia, see Alatas 2009.
- <sup>20</sup> Muhammad Abduh Tausikal, 'Benarkah Habib itu Wali Allah?' at <http://www.konsultasisyariah.com/habib-indonesia/> (accessed 28 August 2014).
- <sup>21</sup> The acronym *Aswaja* is common among NU followers and it gained a stronger emphasis to counter claims by Salafis and other new groups to be counted among the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. It is to differentiate the distinctive version of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* NU follower adhere to and the version that other groups like Salafis hold.

- <sup>22</sup> Personal communication with Asshidiq Ramadan via Facebook, 14 April 2015.
- <sup>23</sup> Personal communication with Hastomo via Facebook, 20 April 2015.
- <sup>24</sup> S3 stands for *strata tiga*, the doctoral level of study in Indonesia.
- <sup>25</sup> Ahmad Sarwat, 'Definisi 'ulama, kyai dan ustadz,' at [http://www.erasmuslim.com/umum/definisi-039ulama-kyai-dan-ustadz.htm#.U\\_2bjGNbjEi](http://www.erasmuslim.com/umum/definisi-039ulama-kyai-dan-ustadz.htm#.U_2bjGNbjEi) (accessed 27 August 2014).
- <sup>26</sup> Ziaul Haq, 'Panggil aku ustadz!' at <http://www.nu.or.id/a,public-m,dinamic-s,detail-ids,50-id,50795-lang,id-c,esai-t,Panggil+Saya+Ustadz+-,phpx> (accessed 27 August 2014).
- <sup>27</sup> On the controversy over the medieval preachers, see Pedersen 1953: 215-231; and Berkey 2001, esp. chapter one.
- <sup>28</sup> Personal communication with Salman Al-Farisi, broadcaster of RDS FM, Karanganyar, 31 August 2012.
- <sup>29</sup> This account is based on 'KH Abdul Karim: Berselawat menenteramkan hati,' *Joglosemar* daily, 21 July 2013.
- <sup>30</sup> This brief biography of Habib Novel is based on <http://ar-raudhah.info/tentang/>; <http://pondokhabib.wordpress.com/2011/12/28/habib-noval-bin-muhammad-alaydrus-melindungi-umat-dari-virus-wahabi/>; and his regular sermon at Majelis Dzikir dan Ilmu Ar-Raudhah, 17 January 2014.
- <sup>31</sup> The information of the birthdate of Soni Parsono and his formal education is based on my personal communication with Hastomo, broadcaster of Al-Hidayah FM via Facebook, 5 November 2013.
- <sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, when I interviewed him in 2012, he was reluctant to inform me about the number of Majelis Al-Hidayah branches. According to Asshidiq Ramadan, announcer of Al-Hidayah FM, Majelis Al-Hidayah has branches only in Grogol Sukoharjo, Pedan Klaten, and Masaran Sragen. Personal communication with Asshidiq Ramadan via Facebook, 14 April 2015.
- <sup>33</sup> Interview with Ahmad Baidhowi, Sukoharjo, 28 February 2014.
- <sup>34</sup> Interview with Habib Novel, Surakarta, 17 January 2014.
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Parsono Agus Waluyo, Karanganyar, 20 September 2013.
- <sup>36</sup> More information on Parsono Agus Waluyu and his Pitutur Luhur can be found at <http://mp3pituturluhur.blogspot.com> (accessed 22 September 2014).
- <sup>37</sup> The biography of Ahmad Sukino can be found in Jinan 2013: 100-105, and Januru 2012: 29-33.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with Abu Ahmad Rahmat, Surakarta, 27 March 2014.
- <sup>39</sup> When I interviewed him, he did not clearly say where he studied in Peshawar. If I am not mistaken, he mentioned Jamil a-Rahman. It seems that the Jamil al-Rahman he meant is the founder of Jama'at al-Da'wat ila al-Qur'an wa Ahl al-Hadith, a strict Salafi faction, who died in 1991. Jamil al-Rahman was a former teacher of Ja'far Umar Thalib. On Jamil al-Rahman, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamil\\_al-Rahman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jamil_al-Rahman) (accessed 15 September 2014).
- <sup>40</sup> On the Al-Madinah Foundation, see <http://almadinah.or.id/about> (accessed 15 September 2014).
- <sup>41</sup> On his profile, see <http://ustadzkholid.com/taaruf/profil-ustadz-kholid/> (accessed 16 September 2014).
- <sup>42</sup> Personal communication with Yanni Rusmanto, Surakarta, 16 July 2012.
- <sup>43</sup> Most of the times, I put 'and the Sunnah' between parentheses when talking about Ahmad Sukino (and MTA), since he focuses more on the Qur'an than the Sunnah. That is why his Salafi opponents castigate him as refusing the Sunnah (*inkar al-sunnah*).



- <sup>44</sup> Revivalism is commonly characterized as the rejection of the authoritativeness of the four *madhhabs*, aspiration to a return to pristine Islam, and reliance on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. See Ricklefs 2012: 515.
- <sup>45</sup> Different from the Qur'an, a *hadith* can be wrong (it can either be fake and fabricated [*maudu'*] or original [*sahih*]). This is why Ahmad Sukino focuses more on the Qur'an, and warns his congregations against fabricated *hadiths*.
- <sup>46</sup> A video of the session can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GGi0rzeuvV0> (accessed 10-3-2015).
- <sup>47</sup> In Arabic: '*La yahillu li ahadin an yaqula bi qaulina hatta ya'lama min aina qulnahu*'.
- <sup>48</sup> Here Ahmad Sukino confused *madhhab* with the sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *hadith*. A *madhhab* is the opinion or a school of thought or method of thinking, not a source.
- <sup>49</sup> Of course, this is Ahmad Sukino's own conclusion, since those imams forbid others *only if* they contradict the Qur'an and the Sunnah.
- <sup>50</sup> Thompson (1995: 82-87), differentiates further between three types of interaction: face-to-face interaction, mediated interaction, and mediated-quasi-interaction. A face-to-face interaction is characterized by the co-presence of a speaker and his/her interlocutor, a shared spatial-temporal reference system, and multiple symbolic cues. It is oriented towards specific others, and, thus, dialogical. A mediated interaction occurs in separated contexts of speaker and his/her interlocutor, and in an extended spatial-temporal framework. Therefore, the use of symbolic cues in this mode of interaction becomes narrower than in face-to-face interaction. It is oriented towards specific others, and dialogical. An example of this type of interaction is communication by telephone. The last mode of interaction, mediated-quasi-interaction, is somewhat similar to mediated interaction in terms of separated contexts, time and space availability, and the narrowed use of symbolic cues.
- <sup>51</sup> In the Brebes dialect of Javanese language: '*Suarane kepenak, Qur'ane ya jelas, hadise ya anu ora nganggo hadis daif-daifan*.'
- <sup>52</sup> In Indonesian: '*Saya tiap pagi, siang, terus habis ini jam 8 pasti saya ... putar terus... soalnya apa dek, saya mendengar apa, mendengar kajian dari Ustadh, Bapak Ustadh Sukino, e saya merasa ya tertarik gitu. Jadi suaranya Bapak Ustadh, Bapak Sukino ini anu apa merdu sekali*.'
- <sup>53</sup> In Indonesian: '*Saya dengar langsung suara Pak Ustadh ya. Kan suaranya keras ya mbak. Yang saya ingat 'apa lagi?' gitu*.' Ahmad Sukino often asked the question '*apa lagi?*' (what else?) to see if more questions remain and need to be answered.
- <sup>54</sup> The verse reads: 'For, Believers are those who, when Allah is mentioned, feel a tremor in their hearts, and when they hear His signs rehearsed, find their faith strengthened, and put (all) their trust in their Lord.'
- <sup>55</sup> In Indonesian (mixed with Javanese [in non-italics]) '*Ini Quran diterangke memang gitu. Kalo merasa terkena malah tambah sakit, tambah anyel, lha hatimu berarti berpenyakit. Kalau tidak segera diobati, mati dalam keadaan kafir nanti*.' Recorded *Jihad Pagi*, 21 August 2011.
- <sup>56</sup> The verse reads: 'In their hearts is a disease; and Allah has increased their disease ...'
- <sup>57</sup> The various texts of the *hadith* can be found, for instance, in al-Bairuni 1992: 39.
- <sup>58</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=2o-JlIpWyHQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=2o-JlIpWyHQ) (accessed 12-3-2015)
- <sup>59</sup> The video recording of the session can be watched at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ybaH9BHK8Us> (accessed 10-3-2015).
- <sup>60</sup> In Indonesian: '*Ngaji itu tidak lama-barunya. Sekalipun kamu lama, kalau hatimu kotor, juga la yamassuhu illa-l mutahharun, tidak bisa disentuh oleh al-Qur'an, karena al-Qur'an itu bersih-suci. Nggak bisa disentuh. Dua puluh tahun, mosok tidak paham?*'

- <sup>61</sup> <http://suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/cetak/2012/01/30/175400/MTA-Ajak-Saling-Tabayyun> (accessed 11-3-2015); <http://www.mta.or.id/2012/01/30/mta-ajak-saling-tabayyun/> (accessed 11-3-2015).
- <sup>62</sup> Qs. 16: 43. The translation reads, '... if ye realize this not, ask those who possess the Message.'
- <sup>63</sup> *Shafa'ah* is a 'prayer or pleading with God on behalf of someone else'. See, for instance, Hoffman 2002: 551-55.
- <sup>64</sup> As Bambang Surono, a former MTA member acknowledged, this denial of *shafa'at* in life in the hereafter was one of the reasons for his withdrawal from the MTA. See <http://mantan-siswamta.blogspot.nl/2012/08/mengapa-saya-keluar-dari-mta-majlis.html>. A Salafi teacher in Cepu, Central Java, wrote about twenty mistakes in the MTA doctrine including its denial of *shafa'ah*. <http://mantan-siswamta.blogspot.nl/2013/02/20-penyimpangan-penyimpangan-mta.html>.
- <sup>65</sup> On his denial, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2UX80laAMUA> (accessed 16-3-2015).
- <sup>66</sup> <http://mantan-siswamta.blogspot.nl/2013/01/orang-mukmin-yang-berdosa-yang-masuk-ke.html> (accessed 16-3-2015).
- <sup>67</sup> The verse reads, 'Not one of you but will pass over it: this is, with thy Lord, a Decree which must be accomplished. But We shall save those who guarded against evil, and We shall leave the wrong-doers therein, (humbled) to their knees'.
- <sup>68</sup> The verse reads, 'But if ye cannot- and of a surety ye cannot- then fear the Fire whose fuel is men and stones, which is prepared for those who reject Faith'.
- <sup>69</sup> The verse reads, 'But Allah will deliver the righteous to their place of salvation: no evil shall touch them, nor shall they grieve'.



## CHAPTER FIVE

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# *DAKWAH* RADIO SERMONS

## LANGUAGE AND AUTHORITY

### **1 Introduction**

In chapter four, I emphasized the importance for a radio preacher of sound and voice in constructing and claiming his authority. It is important because the radio medium gives only sound and noise. In essence, a radio preacher is invisible, and only mediated through his voice. To understand his messages, listeners have somehow to get into his voice. However, how does his voice really sound? In this chapter, I examine how the voice of radio preachers actually sounds. I look at its articulation in delivering sermons, and I will pay particular attention to the languages preachers use in their sermons.

Many studies (for instance Watson 2005a: 773-792; Howell 2008: 40-62; Hoesterey 2008: 95-112) have focused on Indonesian Muslim preachers and their religious careers. They are concerned with the career of Muslim preachers in Islamizing society and the methods they use. Other studies by Ward Keeler (1998) and

Julian Millie (2012b) are devoted to the languages and the styles preachers use in Islamic sermons. According to Ward Keeler, the authority of a preacher derives from 'a position of implicitly superior moral or spiritual or theological insight' (Keeler 1998: 163-178). He further asserts that the evaluation of rhetorical styles in sermons is in accordance with 'the version of religious authority a speaker wishes to evoke' and 'the status concerns of his listeners' (Keeler 1998: 64). He notes three interconnected points in this evaluation: religious styles, modernity, and the State. Moreover, he differentiates two different styles: entertaining and serious. The former consists of sermons that exploit the emotions created by the use of contrasting voices of different characters like those in the shadow puppet performance (*wayang*), songs and stories in order to animate listeners. This entertaining style has roots in the proselytization of the *Walisongo* in the Javanese Islamic tradition. The authority of a preacher of this style lies in his self-identification with this tradition in which local arts and cultures are often used. This style is linked to a 'Javanese form of Islam'. This is in contrast with the second type that includes sermons delivered in a serious style. The authority of a preacher who uses this style rests on 'the authority of the Qur'an, of the Middle East, and so of great learning in a prestigious but highly esoteric tradition' (Keeler 1998: 69). In generating his speech, he endeavors to minimize his use of contrasting voices by citing Arabic passages and by translating them into Javanese. A preacher of this kind is representative of 'a reformist version of Islam' (Keeler 1998: 170). Keeler found quite surprisingly that most listeners favored serious sermons rather than entertaining ones. One reason of this is 'that they feel implicated in the tenor of the speech and style that they evoke' (Keeler 1998: 172). Keeler concludes, 'it is not primarily a matter of religious convictions or religious practice that inclines someone to value one style over the other. It is instead a sense of which style is more in keeping with one's own status claims, and

in keeping with the modern age' (Keeler 1998: 173). In short, the style matters in the evaluation of the preaching.

Julian Millie shares a similar concern with the preaching style as Keeler. He wrote a number of articles dealing with Islamic oratory practices among Sundanese speaking Muslims in West Java (Millie 2011: 151-69; 2012a: 123-45; 2012b: 379-97; 2013: 271-88). One of his focuses is on code-selection. His central question is why Sundanese speaking Muslims prefer Islamic oratory in their own language in certain situations and in Indonesian in other. To answer this question, he offered two layers of analysis, including code selection and code-switching. As for the first, he differentiates two different outcomes of preaching which determined which of two languages (Sundanese and Indonesian) a preacher preferred to choose for his sermon. The first outcome is called '*in situ* gratification'. This outcome is expected in sermons delivered in situations when people gather for 'a reason other than listening to a sermon' (Millie 2012b: 383). Among the many examples are such situations related to the lifecycle events like weddings and circumcisions. In these situations, audience members are heterogeneous in terms of their religious affiliations and currents which renders the priority of one religious inclination to another improper. In this kind of circumstances the preacher would tend to use Sundanese rather than Indonesian. The choice of this linguistic code is not predicated on ideological considerations but on the 'functional value in connecting with listeners at the level of shared emotional identification, intimacy and informality' (Millie 2012b: 385). This is different from sermons aimed at the second outcome, which is transformation, in which the pragmatic value of the Sundanese language is often sidelined in favor of 'the ideologized meanings of the national standard' (Millie 2012b: 385). In these sermons, the Indonesian language rather than Sundanese is preferred. Millie argues that 'Indonesian's indexical meanings as the language of national transformation are recognized by

many Indonesians in communication contexts that are explicitly religious'. In this context, he finds the intermingling connection between 'the civic nationalist project' and 'the civic Islamic project' within the modernist or reformist movement (Millie 2012b: 386).

For Millie, the link between language and socio-religious transformation has in itself nothing to do with oratorical practice. 'But,' he asserts, 'where a preaching situation is underpinned by a religious program dedicated to Islamically informed transformation, the national standard's indexical meanings in this direction are a formidable resource' (Millie 2012: 387). Millie moves to deal with code-switching by analysing a preaching event organized by the Muslim modernist organization Persis, delivered by Shiddiq Amien (d. 2009), its leader. Persis is one of the Muslim organizations that aspire to transformation and modernism. The sermon was in Indonesian in spite of the fact that Amien was a speaker of Sundanese. The preferred choice of Indonesian, according to Millie, was because the participants supported a goal of transformation. However, to mobilize the audience, Amien often switched from one language to the other, from Indonesian to Sundanese and back. Millie observed that this code-switching was 'sparse and disciplined', because 'too much *in situ* gratification would be harmful to the shared commitment to transformation' (Millie 2012b: 391-92).

This chapter studies the languages of *dakwah* radio sermons in Surakarta, Central Java. The studies by Keeler and Millie discussed above are instructive to this chapter. Both writers guide us to pay attention to the style and language used in Islamic sermons and their connection with the authority of the preacher. However, some critical notes should be made to the findings of both writers. First of all, Keeler's distinction between entertaining and serious styles is not practically applicable to radio sermons, the subject of this chapter, which tend to deliver sermons in a serious style. This is especially the case of sermons held inside the studio where

radio managers often control the style to be used. Some radio *dakwah* stations in Surakarta have even set a set of strict rules of conduct which an invited preacher must follow in his sermon, including the choice of words, modes of greeting, communicating with the audience during the sermon, etc.<sup>1</sup> Other radio stations appointed a special board in charge of controlling and evaluating sermons. Secondly, Keeler's identification of the serious style with the 'reformist version of Islam' and the entertaining style with a 'Javanized form of Islam' is also problematic. As stated above, external radio sermons are serious in style. This is also true for studio sermons broadcast on the radio stations run by traditionalist groups who aspire to the preservation of Javanese culture and traditions in harmony with Islamic teaching. Thirdly, the identification of the use of the Indonesian language as the dominant code in transformative sermons with the Islamic and national project as in Millie's studies, and implicitly in Keeler's, raises a question about the use of the Indonesian language in sermons outside these projects like those organized by the traditionalist Nahdlatul Ulama: Is that not part of the national project? The question is based on the fact that in the reformation era the Indonesian government regulated what is called *Otonomi Daerah* (Regional Autonomy). Regardless of its real implementation, the revitalization of local languages can be considered part of the regulation or, at least, is in conformity with it.

Following up the studies that have been done so far, this chapter aims to contribute to the discussion about Islamic sermons. By focusing on radio sermons, it is expected to demonstrate how language use was related to the construction of the religious authority of a radio preacher. It wants to answer such questions as follows: In what languages did radio preachers deliver sermons? In what ways did a radio preacher construct his religious authority through language use? The following paragraphs will attempt to answer these questions.



## 2 Sermon Languages

### 2.1 *Studio and external radio sermons*

Radio sermons can be divided into two kinds. The first sermons are carried out inside the studio and thus can be called ‘studio sermons’. The second sermons are held outside the studio, and thus I refer to them as ‘external sermons’. In terms of the use of language and style, both differ from the other. The dominant language of studio sermons is Indonesian. Only few *dakwah* radio stations air studio sermon programs in Javanese. The linguistic situation of these studio sermons contradict with that of external sermons that are usually delivered in Javanese and in Indonesian. External sermons are derived from multiple settings like life cycle ceremonies, Islamic festivals, and other religious events. In these settings, the Javanese language is very dominant. Broadcasts on radio, such sermons reach audiences different from those present in the initial settings. The distinction between ‘studio sermons’ and ‘external sermons’ is useful to explain the different contexts where and to whom the radio sermons were initially delivered. We will return to this in the next sub-section when analysing the ideological aspects of sermon languages.

#### 2.1.1 *Indonesian*

As noted above, Indonesian is the dominant language of radio sermons, especially but not exclusively those delivered in studios. All radio stations used Indonesian in most of their programs. Most people in Surakarta speak Indonesian well. It is interesting to note what Indonesian dialect radio preachers in Surakarta use. Some studies have demonstrated that Jakartanese Indonesian called *Bahasa gaul* (language of sociability) has impacted on young people outside Jakarta. This included its use in such media as radio. This Jakarta dialect is commonly, but not exclusively, used by Middle class people (Smith-Hefner 2007: 184-203; Manns

2013: 177-210). Jakartanese Indonesian has many distinctive features,<sup>2</sup> for instance, in using the suffix *-in* in the end of passive and active verbs, like *lihatin* 'to look' or 'to view' and *dilihatin* 'to be looked' or 'to be viewed'. In formal forms, these words should be '*melihat*' and '*dilihat*'. The use of *gue* or *gua* instead of *saya* or *aku*, all meaning 'I', and *lu* instead of *kamu* or *anda*, meaning 'you' is another distinctive form of Jakartanese Indonesian. However, the regional autonomy (*otonomi daerah*) regulated since the start of the reformation era has encouraged media activists to revitalize their regional languages. A study carried out by Suryadi on radio in Riau, Sumatra, demonstrates that electronic media, including radio, played a significant role in the enhancement of regionalism. One manifest expression of this regionalism is reflected in radio-broadcasting programs in local languages (Suryadi 2005: 131-151). In line with this, colloquial Indonesian also finds its expression medium in local radio programming. Howard Manns, who studied youth radio in Malang, showed that there has been tension whether Jakartanese or a local language should be the authentic language to be used for radio broadcasting (Manns 2014a: 21-38; 2014b: 43-61). Both writers underline how local identity played an important role in language practices as expressed through radio media. In the case of radio sermons, this finding fits in with the findings of both scholars. Compared to other programs like music shows, the Indonesian language announcers and preachers use are relatively less influenced by the Jakarta dialect.

### 2.1.2 Javanese

Preachers with an NU ideological background intensively exploit the Javanese language in their sermons. What is typical of their Javanese sermons is their rootedness in the long tradition of reading *kitab kuning* (classic Arab texts) as maintained by the traditional *pesantren* (Islamic boarding school) educational system. In bilingual sermons, Javanese functions to elucidate

the complexity of the meaning of classic texts more often than Indonesian. For traditional *pesantren* students (*santri*), the Javanese language is believed to be more fit to represent the deep meanings of these texts than Indonesian. Al-Hidayah FM regularly airs recorded *kitab kuning* recitations by Imron Jamil, a *kyai* from East Java. The *kitab* he read is *Al-Hikam*, a Sufi text written by Ibn 'Ata' Allah al-Sakandari<sup>3</sup> (d. 1309). RBA FM has a replayed program of Qur'anic exegetical lessons given by Sya'roni Ahmadi, a *kyai* from Kudus, Central Java. Radio Pitutur Luhur is an interesting example of how Javanese has become a very dominant preaching medium. All sermons are recorded versions of sermons delivered by its director, Parsono Agus Waluyo, in various preaching events ranging from institutional to life cycle celebrations. None of them are 'studio sermons'. At other occasions like celebrations held by local branches of the NU, Waluyo spoke both Javanese and Indonesian in a relatively equal frequency. Thus, the initial audiences were easily identified, consisting of Javanese speakers. Despite Javanese domination, Indonesian was extensively used to translate and explain Islamic texts like the Qur'an and *hadith*. This was also the case with most other preachers who delivered sermons in Javanese. Indonesian translations of Islamic texts seem to be favored more than Javanese translations. The reason of this is hard to determine. However, it may be assumed that it is because Indonesian translations are abundantly available in the market. Various Indonesian translations of the Qur'an and *hadith* may easily be found in bookstores. This is in contradistinction with Javanese translations of the Qur'an, which are very rarely found in the market. Javanese translations of the *hadith* books can be found more easily than those of the Qur'an, but they are written in Arabic script (*pegon*) and are circulated particularly among *pesantren* communities. In other words, *hadith* books in Javanese translation are only accessible to those skilled in reading *pegon* (adapted Arabic script used to write Javanese).

Other groups also delivered Javanese sermons outside the studio. Al-Madinah FM, a Salafi radio station, broadcasts Qur'anic exegetical lessons given by Abu Ahmad Rahmat, the director of Ma'had Al-Madinah. This example of a Salafi teacher is interesting since Arabness tends to be more dominant among Salafis as expressed in their ways of dress and speaking and in their manifestation of an 'Arabized Islam' (Hasan 2008). This assumption is only partly true as many Javanese speaking Salafi teachers often give Islamic lessons in their mother tongue. Abu Ahmad Rahmat, himself Javanese, considered the Javanese language as an important medium for conducting *dakwah* among Javanese society. More importantly, for him, the power of Javanese lies in the richness of its vocabulary which is able to uncover the deep meanings of Islamic texts like the Qur'an and *hadith*. Interestingly, as he told me, he frequently learned from preachers from NU ideologically affiliated radio stations about important Javanese words used to translate important Islamic Arabic terms.<sup>4</sup> Darussalaf FM, a Salafi radio station, has a program taken from sermons delivered in Javanese by Muhammad Rijal, a Salafi teacher and the leader of Ma'had Ibnu Taimiyah in Banyumas, Central Java. The sermons were recorded during many sermonizing events from one *majlis taklim* to another. Abu Nashim Mukhtar, the director of Ma'had Darussalaf in Sukoharjo where Darussalaf FM is located, delivered Javanese sermons at various occasions.

MTA FM's *Jihad Pagi* is another interesting example of how Javanese language plays a significant role in a radio sermons. It should be noted that the program itself is in Indonesian. However, the predominant role of Javanese in moving listeners cannot be neglected. It may be said that Ahmad Sukino, as the central figure of this sermonizing event, successfully exploits the Javanese language to mobilize his audiences of whom the majority is Javanese speaking. The Javanese language in his sermons is so dominant that once a Sundanese speaking female listener from

Tasikmalaya, West Java, asked him to speak Indonesian only. She also asked him to send MTA teachers who speak Indonesian or relevant local languages to regions where Javanese is not understood. In response to this request, Sukino himself promised to try to speak in Indonesian as much as possible (99 % as in the statement published on MTA's website).<sup>5</sup> The request of this Sundanese listener elicited various responses from other listeners. Most of them considered her remarks relevant since Indonesian was the national language and understood by wider audiences than Javanese. For other listeners, one of the interesting sides of Ahmad Sukino's sermons was in fact his Javanese style, including his frequent use of Javanese words. *Ustad On Air* is another program that features Ahmad Sukino. This is a live program that starts with an introduction, and continues with interactive sessions where listeners are invited to raise questions about Islam. It is held in the studio, and also broadcast on MTA TV. In the program, Sukino delivers sermons mostly in a formal way. Different from *Jihad Pagi*, in *Ustad On Air* Sukino seems relatively consistent in his use of Indonesian. However, when a listener asked a question in Javanese, he replied in Javanese or both in Javanese and in Indonesian. The most distinctive feature is that unlike in *Jihad Pagi*, *Ustad On Air* lacks entertaining elements and has no humor. Other sermonizing programs MTA FM broadcasts like *Fajar Hidayah* are given in Indonesian in a formal and serious style.

### 2.1.3 Arabic

Some *dakwah* radio stations like MTA FM and Suara Quran FM have a program that teaches Arabic. However, there is no radio sermon in Surakarta delivered in this language except those given by Middle Eastern ulama. Salafi radio stations often played recordings of their sermons. Sometimes, a Salafi Shaikh was invited to teach in a *daurah* (symposium) which was broadcast on the radio. Sometimes, live interactive phone

calls were made. Al-Hidayah FM once broadcasted a sermon of Muhammad Hisham Kabbani who was invited to come to Surakarta. Kabbani is a Lebanese-American Sufi who has many students in Indonesia. In his sermons, the role of an Indonesian interpreter was pivotal. The deliverance in Indonesia of Arabic sermons by Middle Eastern ulama were the result of networking established by the institutions with which *dakwah* radio stations are affiliated.

The participation of preachers of Arab descent (called *haba'ib*, sing. *habib*) is very interesting. Rather than using Arabic, they seem to be more acquainted with Javanese culture and language. They are proud of being *wong Solo* or *orang Solo* (Solonese or Surakartan) as a *habib* named Novel calls himself.<sup>6</sup> This is clearly manifested in their ways of speaking and using Javanese in daily life. Novel speaks both Javanese and Indonesian in his sermons. He often had difficulties to translate Javanese terms into Indonesian. Habib Syech, one of the most important Arab figures in Surakarta and a preacher at Al-Hidayah FM, combines Javanese and Indonesian in his sermons. But, I observed that he much prefers Javanese to Indonesian. He speaks Javanese in two styles, *ngoko* (low Javanese) and *kromo* (high Javanese) mixed in his sermons. Especially when he mentioned the names of Javanese ulama, he used *kromo* clearly aimed to pay respect to them. In this regard, it is interesting to see how the authority of Javanese ulama and Arab *habib* is constructed, which is, among others, through their ways of addressing each other. *Habibs* derive their authority from their blood ties with the Prophet Muhammad, while that of Javanese ulama is derived from their knowledge of both Islamic *shari'ah* and esoteric wisdom ('*ilm al-batin*'). Although highly respected by traditionalists (because of their blood ties with the Prophet), the authority of *habibs* is often challenged by that of Javanese ulama. The late Abdurrahman Wahid (best known as Gus Dur), the former President of Indonesia and leader of the NU, for instance,

wielded very high authority not only among Javanese ulama, but also among *habibs*, including Habib Syech in Surakarta.

While this section focuses on what languages were used and who used them, in the subsequent section, we will discuss how they perceived these languages in order to unveil the ideologies behind the languages use in radio sermons.

### 3 Ideological aspects of sermon languages

The various languages used in radio sermons reflect the different ideologies of their users. Thus, it is important to unveil the language ideologies of radio sermons. Following Silverstein (1979: 193), a language ideology is a set of beliefs and perceptions users have about languages. These beliefs and perceptions play a role in the rationalization or the justification for language use. Therefore, it helps us to conceive why a certain language is used and more dominantly so than others. Here we can explore multilayered aspects of radio sermon languages, including the legal and local aspects, religious contexts, institutions and methods used in delivering sermons on radio.

#### 3.1 Legal contexts

To understand the language ideologies behind radio sermons, it is worth mentioning briefly the legal aspect of radio broadcasting in Indonesia with regard to language usage. In the Indonesian broadcasting law no. 32 of 2002,<sup>7</sup> there is no strict regulation on languages. Article no. 37 of the law states that the main medium language of broadcasting should be ‘Indonesian which is good and correct’ (*Bahasa Indonesia yang baik dan benar*). This is a general regulation which gives no restriction to the possible use of languages other than Indonesian. Article 32 no. 1 of the law regulates that regional languages may be used in those broadcasting programs that have a ‘local content’ (*program siaran*

*dengan muatan lokal*). The Javanese language is no exception. In 2012, the Central Java regional government issued a Regional Regulation no. 9 (*Peraturan Daerah* or *Perda* no. 9) concerning the Javanese language, literature, and script.<sup>8</sup> The regulation was issued as part of the implementation of the law of regional autonomy of 2004. As stated in article 7 of the regulation, the Javanese language is not only a medium of communication but also a ‘marker of personhood and the securer of the identity of a regional community’ (*pembentuk kepribadian dan peneguh jatidiri suatu masyarakat di daerah*). Viewed from these regulations, radio sermons delivered in local languages may be considered as ‘local content programs’. Irrespective of what ‘local’ means to Islamic sermons, the use of local languages can be considered part of maintaining local identities.

As I explained in chapter three, *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta emerged from specific communities that were bound by their shared religious orientations. They were (and some still are) *radio komunitas*. The establishment of *radio komunitas* has to abide to governmental regulation No. 5 of 2005 on the organization of community broadcasting.<sup>9</sup> Article no. 21 of the regulation deals specifically with broadcasting languages. No. 1 of this article reads, ‘The primary language medium in organizing broadcasting programs must be *Indonesian that is good and correct*’. No. 2 of the article states that local languages can be used as a secondary medium for programs with ‘local content’. No. 3 of the same article allows the use of foreign languages for educational purposes.

Seen from this regulation, it is clear that Indonesian language is the primary medium for radio broadcasting, and that local languages can be used. The regulation does not mention the legal consequences and sanctions that may be suffered when languages are not used in accordance with the regulation.



### 3.2 Local contexts

Surakarta consists of various ethnic groups. The main ethnic group is the Javanese. Other ethnic groups living in Surakarta are other Indonesians, Arabs and Chinese. Surakartans, including those of non-Javanese origin who have long been living there, speak Javanese every day. However, most Surakartan people also speak Indonesian. Therefore, they are bilingual. The Javanese dialect of Surakarta and Yogyakarta is considered the most refined (*halus*) (Koentjaraningrat 1985) against which other Javanese dialects should be evaluated. Linguistically, two elements of Javanese language are determinant to the creation of styles. These styles differ in the form of their affixes, vocabulary, use of emphatic particles and syntactic differentiations, and the use of different personal and demonstrative pronouns. Based on these elements, there are three basic styles of Javanese spoken language: *ngoko*, *madyo* and *krami* or *kromo* (familiar, semi-formal and formal respectively) (Koentjaraningrat 1985: 18). The highest status of this dialect can be traced back to the commonly held view that Surakarta and Yogyakarta, are the centers of Javanese culture.

With the domination of Indonesian language after independence, the Javanese language never disappeared, but changes occurred in many aspects. For instance, there has been a tendency among Javanese people to shift from formal Javanese (*kromo*) to Indonesian. According to scholars like Poedjosoedarmo (2006: 111-121) and Errington (1998), the Indonesian language as a lingua franca has impacted on the decreasing competency in using the refined form (*kromo halus*) of Javanese. The rise of the middle class has contributed to this language shifting as can be seen in the use of *bahasa gaul* (language of sociability) (Smith-Hefner 2007: 184-203). After Independence, Indonesian (called *Bahasa Indonesia*) changed the domination of local languages through long political and cultural processes. During the New Order, the Indonesian language was mobilized to take its part in

the national development project.<sup>10</sup> As Errington has noted, in the New Order, the Indonesian language derived its authority from two sources: first is its status as the standard national language (standardist authority), and the second is its exemplary usage (exemplary authority). As a standard national language, it not only marks Indonesian national identity, but also eliminates ethnic and linguistic differences through standardization. However, this does not erase the fact that the domination of ethnic groups and elites through the exemplary use of the Indonesian language has resulted in a social hierarchy. Errington describes this exemplary use as 'highly polite in face-to-face interaction' and marking 'a formal or deferential relation to a speech partner' (Errington 1995: 216-218).

In practice, *dakwah* radio stations follow no fixed rule in the language it uses for radio sermons. However, the Indonesian language is more commonly used because it is considered capable to reach a wider audience than only the Javanese.<sup>11</sup> However, local languages are also used either to reach a specific audience or to fit in with a specific context. This is in line with the regulation discussed above.

### 3. 3 Religious contexts

As a sacred language, the Arabic language occupies the highest position in the Muslim world. Moreover, it is also the main language of Islamic intellectualism. In principle, the knowledge of Arabic is a primary requirement for a future ulama. The ability of becoming an ulama is often predicated, among other things, on knowledge of Arabic. This is because the main sources of Islamic knowledge and teaching are written in Arabic. However, looking at Islamic sermon manuals, knowledge of Arabic language is not a must.<sup>12</sup> It is only preferable. Muhammad Natsir (d. 1993), a leading Muslim preacher, put forward two important things a would-be preacher (*muballigh*) should master. They include *tafaquh fi al-nas* (deep

knowledge of society) and *tafaqquh fi al-din* (deep knowledge of religion). Under the *tafaqquh fi al-din* is included the command of the Qur'anic language (*bahasa al-Qur'an*). Natsir considers Arabic not only as a religious language but also the language of culture. He further said, 'It [Arabic] is a language of culture, a language of intelligence, a key to various and rich sciences' (Natsir 1965: 145). The task of a preacher is to deliver Islamic messages, not to interpret them which is the task of an '*alim* (singular form of *ulama*) or, more specifically, an exegete (*mufasssir*). In fact, this differentiation between the task of the ulama and that of preachers is not always self-evident, since a preacher also needs some competence in interpreting and explaining Islam.

The valuation of a sermon is often, but not always, predicated on the command of the Arabic language. This can be seen in the criticism raised against Ahmad Sukino. For his opponents, one of the weaknesses of his sermons and opinions on Islamic matters is his lack of Arabic. They also criticized his overreliance on the Indonesian translation of the Qur'an produced by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Muhammad 2012: 2, 62-62). Among his critics are former MTA members. When asked about MTA's ulama-ship, one of the former members replied: 'You can ask MTA, how many *ustadhs* (of MTA) know Arabic? This is the basis (of Islamic knowledge), is it possible that a person can be considered an *ulama* while he has no command of elementary Arabic?'<sup>13</sup> Of course, the evaluation of command of Arabic can also be directed to other radio preachers. Therefore, the fact that it was Sukino who became the target of criticism implies its political and ideological significance. What is important to note is, however, Muslim's changing definitions of what an ulama is. It is clear that not all media preachers, including radio preachers, can be considered ulama in the traditional sense. Although competency of the Arabic language is often absent with media preachers, their religious authority remains undeniable in the modern era. In non-Arabic

speaking Muslim countries like Indonesia, Arabic competency can be less relevant for evaluating the quality of a sermon. This is, as Schulz has noted, because sermons are often evaluated based on 'practices and understandings of "common", non-erudite Muslim believers' and 'they frame their engagement with sermons in terms borrowed from conventional, not necessarily Islamic, notions of the emotive, transformative potential listening' (Schulz 2012c: 213-214). The ethics of sermon listening refers to the practice of listening to sermons as an exercise of ethical self-discipline. As Hirschkind has elaborated with regard to Islamic cassette sermons in Egypt, such a practice enabled people to live as devout Muslims (Hirschkind 2001: 623-649; 2006, chapter three).

The use of local languages like Javanese for religious activities (except for obligatory religious services) was not problematic until very recently. Muslims were allowed to execute their voluntary devotions in non-Arabic. There were disputes over the use of non-Arabic in obligatory worships like the five time prayers. In Indonesia, one example of such a disputes concerned Yusman Roy, a religious teacher (*kyai*) from Malang, East Java. In 2004, the local branch of the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) issued a *fatwa* declaring the deviation of his teaching on the use of two languages (Arabic and Javanese/Indonesian) in the obligatory five time prayers. A similar *fatwa* was issued by the provincial MUI of East Java in 2005 (see Fenwick 2011: 497-524; Hosen 2012: 1-16). According to Mark Woodward and others (2010), Abu Bakar Baasyir, the leader of Pondok Al-Mukmin in Sukoharjo, Central Java holds that Javanese is a language of unbelievers since it often uses honorifics. This may be understood as a kind of anti-Javanese movement mobilized by Muslim conservatives who try to restore Islam to its originality. However, this is only a minor opinion which does not dominate the public discourse. In practice, sometimes Baasyir mixed Indonesian and Javanese in front of a Javanese speaking audience. I never attended his sermons. However, we

can watch them on YouTube or upload them from the Internet. For example, in a sermon he held in 2007 in Sragen, Central Java, Abu Bakar Baasyir inserted a story about his neighbor in Ngruki Village who refused to rent his house to a Christian. Although Indonesian was the main language of the sermon, he switched to Javanese to tell this story. He also used a Javanese term to explain the essence of *'ibadah* (Islamic worship or devotion). He explained that *'ibadah* in Islam is not confined to rituals, but it involves everything Muslims say and do. He said (in Indonesian) as follows, 'Maka orang beriman itu pandai mengatur hidupnya dan *solah bowo muna-muni*-nya sehingga disukai oleh Allah, semua rentetan hidupnya itu ibadah,' (So, [if] a believer diligently manages his life and *acts and says* things pleasing to Allah, his entire life course is [considered] worship.' In this sentence, he inserted the ethnic loaded Javanese expression '*solah bowo, muna-muni*', which literally means 'acts and sayings'.<sup>14</sup> This fact implies that Baasyir's evaluation of Javanese as a language of unbelievers as stated above should be situated within his criticism against the Javanese cult of the reverence of saints and other figures. Regardless of the fact that he is inclined to use Indonesian most of the time, Javanese seems clearly important for Baasyir as a medium of communication especially when his audience consists of rural people, to have intimate contact with them.

### *3.4 Dakwah institutions and methods of sermons*

In order to further understand the ideological sides of the languages of the sermons, it is of importance to see how it is related to the institutions behind the *dakwah* radio stations especially with regards to the sermons they organize and the methods they use. No less important is to look at the contexts in which sermons are delivered as they will clarify what languages are mostly used and what styles are mostly followed. Behind the external programs are the various sermonizing events organized

in various settings and institutions. They can include *majlis taklim*, *pesantren*, mosques, and during life cycle events and public gatherings (*pengajian umum*). *Jihad Pagi* is held by a *majlis taklim* under the aegis of the MTA foundation. The participants come from different social settings ranging from lower to middle classes. The preaching method is interactive, starting with reading a *Brosur* and followed by question-answer sessions. The *Brosur* consists of Qur'anic verses or prophetic *hadith* and their Indonesian translations centering around a specific theme. Ahmad Sukino's interpretation of these texts plays a central role and their Indonesian translation is a main medium. While listening to Ahmad Sukino's explanation, many (but not all) participants make notes. This is most characteristic of the participants during *Jihad Pagi* sessions. The method seems to fit their strict understanding of the Qur'an and the *hadith*.

The method used in *Jihad Pagi* is different from that used in other *majlis taklim* like Majlis Ar-Raudhah broadcast live on Al-Hidayah FM and led by Novel bin Muhammad Al-Aydrus, best known as Habib Novel. In this *majlis*, the sermon starts with reading and chanting *salawat* and is followed by a lecture by him in which often singing *salawat* songs or other prayers are inserted. The use of diverse genres within a speech like this enables him to shift from one style to another, for instance from a serious talk to humor, from *kromo* to *ngoko* and the other way around. In his lecture, Novel discussed a specific theme, which was often continued in following meetings. Sometimes he used and discussed an Arabic book. The primary language is Indonesian. Like the *Jihad Pagi*, these sermons are interactive and participants are welcome to raise questions but the question-answer part is quite short compared to that in *Jihad Pagi*. Different from *Jihad Pagi*, during his sermons the participants did not make notes of the explanations Novel gave. According to him, the reason for this is that the *majlis* is not like a *pesantren* where *kitab kuning*

are taught. Furthermore, for him, the culture and habit of writing should be maintained by *pesantren*. He underlined the fact that the participants in this kind of *majlis* would not often bother to take notes.<sup>15</sup>

As one of the central places of Islamic education, mosques are also institutions behind most of external radio sermon programs. RDS FM, for example, has a regular sermon program derived from sermons regularly delivered after *maghrib* prayers at the Istiqomah Mosque in Penumping, Surakarta. In these sermons, an *ustadh* read and interpret a pre-selected Arabic book. When I attended one of these sermons, an *ustadh* named Badru Tamam from Ma'had Isy Karima in Karanganyar, Central Java read and explained the *Riyad al-Salihin*, a *hadith* collection by Abu Zakariya al-Nawawi (d. 1277). The primary text was in Arabic and the explanation was made in Indonesian. Some participants made notes of his explanations but did not participate in reading the primary text. Most of them only listened to the sermon. The central authority was in the hands of the *ustadh*. From the various sermonizing events I attended I came to know that this kind of sermon was common among Salafi groups. The method was quite similar to that used in the Istiqomah mosque. Nevertheless, reading an Arabic book is only one of the methods used in this mosque. At other times, sermons were delivered in the form of a public lecture where the *ustadh* explained a certain theme without referring to a specific Arabic book. Reading an Arabic book like this is common in traditional *pesantrens* in Java. What differentiates them from preachers from RDS or Salafi groups is the language they used. In traditional *pesantrens*, Javanese is used as the main language to translate and explain Arabic texts, while RDS or Salafi preachers use Indonesian. This difference is important, since it also marks the different religious orientations between traditionalists, and modernists and revivalists. Van Bruinessen has noted that until the 1960s the ideological distinction between

modernists and traditionalists could clearly be drawn through their different types of public readings. The traditionalists read *kitab kuning* (lit. yellow book, books in Arabic), while modernists read *buku putih* (lit. white book, meaning non-Arabic books) (Bruinessen 1990: 227). At present, this distinction has become blurred since modernists and revivalists like many members of the Muhammadiyah, and Salafis read and use *kitab kuning*, and, the other way around, traditionalists have started to read *buku putih*. What remains relevant to distinguish them is that Javanese language is still used in *pesantrens* to translate the *kitab kuning*. More traditional *pesantren* even use only Javanese.

Different types of sermons were delivered in public gatherings (*pengajian umum*). Pitutur Luhur and Al-Hidayah FM, both ideologically NU-affiliated, regularly aired public gatherings organized by their mother institutions or by others. The sermons aired on Pitutur Luhur were given by Parsono Agus Waluyo, who is also the owner of the radio station. The sermons originated from various events like weddings, circumcisions, and organizational events. The main language used was Javanese. The themes varied according to the events when the sermons were delivered. Sometimes the singing of *salawat* songs was inserted as a break. The participants mostly came from rural social backgrounds, and public gatherings were also held in rural settings. The sermons were recorded and stored on CDs and subsequently played on the radio. Like Pitutur Luhur, Al-Hidayah FM aired sermons from public gatherings held by Majelis Al-Hidayah and its networks like Jamuro and Jamuri,<sup>16</sup> Ahbaabul Mushthofa, and Ar-Raudhah. In these gatherings, sermons were delivered in Javanese or in Indonesian or both. These gatherings invited *ustadhs* affiliated with Majelis Al-Hidayah and other guest *ustadhs* so that the dominant language was different from one gathering to another. However, Javanese tends to play a significant role in most gatherings. Some of these *ustadhs* have a *pesantren* education background and this



can clearly be seen from their repeated references to *kitab kuning* but especially because of their language use. Unlike Pitutur Luhur, Al-Hidayah FM aired these public gatherings live.

In this section, we have discussed radio languages and ideologies related to them at length. In the following section, we move to the context in which these languages are used in radio sermons.

#### **4 Delivering sermons: style, ideology and authority**

This section will be devoted to an understanding of how radio preachers claimed their authority. Following Keeler and Millie as discussed earlier in this chapter, I will focus on the sermonizing styles, language code and shifting. As mentioned earlier, Ward Keeler classified Javanese sermons into two styles. The first style is highly entertaining and constantly uses the contrasts between speech and song, and between polite, respectful, and/or refined speech and coarse, rough or familiar speech. The second style is ‘a single, serious one, constant use of either refined Javanese or the national language, Indonesian, or perhaps a mixture of the two, plus a great range of Arabic, and the exclusion of song and narrative’ (Keeler 1998: 166). To this last style, Millie has made a critical note, which is that Keeler’s classification excludes the multivocal richness of the preaching style in the sense of contrasting voices and diverse ways of speaking. Millie said that the exclusion of this richness means the exclusion of the use of the expressive registers of Javanese. ‘For in preaching to regional audiences,’ Millie said, ‘a satisfying multivocality materializes in the expressive modes of the regional language rather than Indonesian’ (Millie 2012a: 388).

In Javanese, speech styles are very complicated since they are closely connected with the hierarchical social status of the speaker in relation to his/her interlocutor. ‘One thus cannot speak Javanese without making a statement about one’s hierarchical position vis-

à-vis the second person,' said Siegel (1986: 15). The hierarchical significance of speaking Javanese implies how authority may be claimed, which is through language use. A preacher claimed his authority from taking a superior position vis-à-vis his listeners. As Keeler has pointed out, because the truth-value concerning one's life lies at the core of sermons, an analysis of the way a preacher claims authority should take both the performance and the ideology behind sermons into account (Keeler 1998: 164). Keeler asserted that the valuation of a sermon is not predicated on religious convictions or religious practice but on 'which style is more in keeping with one's own status claims, and in keeping with the modern age' (Keeler 1998: 173). It is to this last point I want to make a critical note. Although this is true, religious orientations also influence the valuation of the kind of religious authority a preacher wishes to claim. For example, modernists claim their religious authority based on their strict rational interpretation of the Qur'an and the *hadith*. Consequently, they will minimize the use of contrasting styles and narratives as much as possible and stick only to the Qur'an and the *hadith*. By contrast, traditionalists build their religious authority on the interpretation of the four Sunni schools of law and imitate the *Walisongo* method of *dakwah*. According to this method, Islamic *dakwah* should adapt to local cultures rather than eradicate them.<sup>17</sup> The use of *wayang* performances and other traditional arts for *dakwah* purposes is believed to be based on the *Walisongo* method. This led them to exploit every possible contrasting speech style just like in *wayang* performances.

The following paragraphs deal with some examples of radio sermons. The first example includes two external sermons delivered by Parsono Agus Waluyo of Radio Pitutur Luhur and Soni Parsono of Al-Hidayah FM respectively. The next examples include two studio sermons, one by Ahmad Sukino of MTA FM and one by Abu Bakar Fahmi of Al-Hidayah FM. The last is a studio sermon by Abu Khonsa broadcasted on Suara Quran FM. Through these

examples, I will analyze how a preacher used linguistic resources through code-switching and styles of speech. Particular attention is given to micro-shifts and mixing within code alterations taking place during speech. In this case, I follow Maryns and Blommaert in interpreting bilingualism, by focusing on ‘how speakers handle codes as resources for accomplishing interactional goals’ (Maryns and Blommaert 2001: 61-84). Maryns and Blommaert put emphasis on the urgent need to pay attention to the indexicality of code-switching. Within this framework, the voicing and identity aspects of code alternation take a prominence. From this perspective, shifts in and mixing of languages of radio sermons can be perceived as ‘indexical of a range of emotive, epistemic and affective orientations to places and events’ and clarify ‘the subject positions vis-à-vis the narrated events and experiences.’ By doing so, my analysis differs from both Keeler and Millie who paid attention to macro-shifts from one language to another only.

#### *4.1 Examples of external radio sermons*

Let us start with the first example, which is the sermon by Parsono Agus Waluyo, the director of Radio Pitutur Luhur in Karang Pandang, Karanganyar, Central Java. In this region he is a local NU leader. The NU is known as a traditionalist organization that firmly holds on to the teaching of the four Sunni schools of law. As I said before, his sermons that were broadcasted on the radio were recorded during various sermonizing events. I will describe the sermon I attended on 1 February 2014 in Klaten, Central Java. Although I do not know if this sermon was already copied onto CD format, it is clear that the sermon was done more or less in a similar way as those available on CDs.<sup>18</sup> This event was held by a sub-branch of the NU in Klaten to celebrate the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad. Hundreds of Muslims, male and female, young and old, attended the event. They came from rural villages surrounding the office building of the NU sub-branch. In



CD cover of *Pitutur Luhur Vol. 1* with the picture of Ustadh Parsono Agus Waluyo inside.

the huge mass of people, some participants paid attention to the sermon, while others chatted with each other. The MC (master of ceremony) introduced the speaker to the audience as the director of Radio Pitutur Luhur. The primary language used was Javanese, while Indonesian was secondary. Arabic words appeared especially in Qur'anic and *hadith* quotations and also included particular Islamic terms. The sermon that Waluyo delivered was one Ward Keeler would identify as entertaining, laden with stories and humor. The topic as requested by the organizer was on the birth of the Prophet (*maulid al-rasul*). He opened his sermon with a greeting, saying thanks to God, and with praying for the Prophet. He then addressed the audience ranging from *ulama* and other officials to common listeners.

He started to talk about the important role of the heart. According to him, the grandeur of the Nahdlatul Ulama stems not from reason but from the heart. For him, this is also the basic reason for celebrating the birthday of the Prophet and organizing other rituals like *Yasinan* (reading the Yasin chapter of the Qur'an) and *slametan* (ritual meal). This is in contradiction with the opinion of other Muslims who consider these practices *bid'ah* (reprehensible religious innovation). Unfortunately he did not offer an explicit explanation of the distinction between acceptance by 'reason' and by 'heart'. It seemed that he was trying to situate the sermon within the controversies surrounding the celebration of the Prophet's birthday and that the celebration should be accepted rather than debated. Clarifying the different attitudes towards the celebration, he classified men into four groups. He said as follows:

*"Lo kulo tak cerito nggih. Menungso saiki, Pak-Bu, niku dipontho dadi papat. Ngertos dipontho? Dipontho ki dibagi. Basane pesantren kuno lha dipontho. Satu, pinter slamet. Dua, pinter keblinger. Tiga, bodho slamet. Empat, bodho keblinger. Paham, mboten?"*

*(Let me tell you something. Ladies and gentlemen, men are classified [dipontho] into four. Do you know 'dipontho'? Dipontho means 'classified'. According to the traditional pesantren language, [it is] dipontho. The **first** are those smart and saved. **Second** are those smart but gone astray. **Third** are those foolish but saved. **Fourth** are those foolish and gone astray. Do you understand?)*

This excerpt demonstrates that Waluyo used Javanese *ngoko* (non-italicized) and *kromo* (italicized), and Indonesian (bold). As Errington proposed, *ngoko* is the basic language, since it is learned as the 'first' language. 'It is neither polite nor impolite,' he says (Errington 1998: 38). *Kromo* or refined style Waluyo used is medium, which means not the most refined style (*alus*) or, in Errington's words, low *basa*. In this regard, Waluyo's less refined

style was not problematic, although he talked to an audience of elderly people. This style is acceptable and appropriate to people within a village community, which is different from elites whose weak competence in the most refined style (high *basa*) is problematic in their elite circles (Errington 1998: 45). At the same time, Waluyo inserted Indonesian words (bold in the excerpt above) between the two forms of Javanese. The shift from one to another style was often unpredictable, let alone from Javanese to Indonesian. What is clear, at least for me as a Javanese speaker, is that when he communicated a concept or explained an important idea to his audience, he used a serious tone either in Javanese or in Indonesian. In this situation, he spoke formal rather than informal Indonesian. This is more clearly seen in the following excerpt:

*Jumlah **sahabat** pinten? Jumlah **sahabat** itu di akhir hayat Rasulullah Muhammad Saw. niku ribuan, bahkan puluhan ribu ... apa itu definisi **sahabat**? Alim-ulama menyatakan sahabat adalah orang-orang yang pernah berjumpa dengan **Rasulullah** neng beriman. (How many **sahabats** [did the prophet have]? The number of **sahabats** until the end of his life were thousands, even ten thousands ... Who is the **sahabat**? **Ulama** stated that **sahabat** are those who had met **Rasulullah** and believed [in his prophethood].*

We can see very clearly from the above excerpt that when dealing with the number and the definition of *sahabat* (the Prophet's companions), Waluyo moved from speaking in Javanese (italicized) to speaking in Indonesian (bold) besides Arabic terms (bold italicized).

It is important to understand how Waluyo used Indonesian. Using Indonesian among Javanese speakers is the way out of Javanese language complexity, avoiding hierarchy. However, it can also be said that it was to lift himself above the shared level of the community he addressed. In this regard, he represented himself as superior to them. Many Javanese preachers like him

translated Arabic texts of the Qur'an and *hadith* into Indonesian rather than into Javanese. In my opinion, the reason why they preferred Indonesian translations over Javanese ones is because of the available sources accessible to them. It is easier for them to find an Indonesian translation of the Qur'an and *hadith* than a Javanese one, as mentioned above. The 'standard' translation of the Qur'an is that of the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs. However, they can also use other Indonesian Qur'anic translations. Nowadays, likewise, there is an abundance of translations of *hadith* collections in bookstores. This has facilitated preachers in the use of the *hadith* texts they wanted to quote. The case is different with the Javanese translation of both the Qur'an and *hadith* collections which are very rare or even absent in the market but may easily be found among *pesantren* communities. It is interesting that he explained a specific word that is rarely used in common society. It is the word '*pontho*', which is commonly used in *pesantren* communities, especially when reading *kitab kuning*. This immediately reveals which tradition he was representing. He was trained in various *pesantren* in East Java for several years. One of them was a very traditional *pesantren*. When I visited him in September 2013, he showed me a building that was under construction. The building was like a stage without a ground floor. He told me that the construction of this building imitated that of his previous *pesantren* in Kediri, East Java.<sup>19</sup>

During the sermon, Waluyo used much humor. He often made contact with his listeners by speaking Javanese *ngoko* so that the hierarchical gap disappeared. He also used *ngoko* while addressing elderly listeners. In the quote above, he addressed them by saying *Pak-Bu*, literally meaning 'fathers and mothers', indicating the elderly audiences he was specifically addressing. By using *ngoko*, he neutralized the hierarchy and created intimacy. Nevertheless, as Siegel has warned, hierarchy and intimacy are intermingled with, and not separated from, each other. This means that



intimacy does not automatically abolish hierarchy. As Siegel said, in the Javanese understanding, intimacy depends on hierarchy (Siegel 1986: 37). As a religious figure, a preacher is morally and theologically superior. This allows him to keep using *ngoko*. It is just like a teacher teaching his students.

A bit similar to Waluyo's sermons are those of Soni Parsono, the director of Al-Hidayah FM. So far, he never delivered sermons in the studio regardless of the fact that he himself is Al-Hidayah FM's director. Like Waluyo's, his sermons that were broadcasted on radio were recorded during various oratory events. Different from those of Waluyo, his sermons were aired live on radio, and some of them were copied onto CDs. Both Waluyo and Soni Parsono are ideologically bound with the NU. While the former is structurally attached to the organization, the latter is not a structural member. While the Javanese language was dominant in the sermons of the former, Indonesian and Javanese were equally dominant in terms of their frequency in the sermons of the latter. However, both used Indonesian for translations and for shifting from informal to formal speech. It is interesting that Soni Parsono used Javanese not only in rural but also in urban settings. For instance, on 6 November 2013, he was invited by the foundation of the royal court of Pajang (*Yayasan Kasultanan Keraton Pajang*), Kartasura (not to be confused with Surakarta) to celebrate the Islamic New Year. Attending this event were not only members of Majelis Taklim Al-Hidayah but also royal members of the courts of Pajang and Surakarta, and of Demak in Central Java, and Palembang in Sumatra. In this occasion, he not only delivered a sermon but also received a court title. During his sermon, he spoke both in Indonesian and in Javanese. He was talking about al-'Ashura (10th of the first month of Islamic calendar Muharram).<sup>20</sup> In his sermon, he referred to *Mukashafat al-Qulub* by al-Ghazali (d. 1111) on whom Soni Parsono commented as follows:



Imam Ghazali itu lahirnya tahun 450 Hijriyah. Jaraknya dengan Kanjeng Nabi tidak terlalu jauh. Beliau wafat tahun 504 Hijriyah. Usianya cuman 50 tahun. Tapi, ... karyanya dikaji di pesantren di seluruh dunia ...*kitab-kitab* karyanya luar biasa ... Nek njenengan wis moco tulisane Imam Ghazali, ora usah tekon dalile **mana?** Mosok karo bojone wae percoyo, karo Imam Ghazali ra percoyo. Nggih? Kalau sudah yang nulis Imam al-Shafi'i ini sudah orang yang pakar Quran, orang yang paling pakar hadis, wis *sami'na wa ata'na* cukup, ora usah mbuk debat!

(Al-Ghazali was born in 450 of Hijra. The span era between him and the Prophet was not so long. He passed away in 504 [!] of Hijra. He was only 50 [sic, 54] years old. But, ... his works have been studied in pesantren around the world ... His *kitab*s are incredible...If you have read al-Ghazali's writings, don't ask **what** is the pretext? If you believe your spouse, will you not believe al-Ghazali? **Ok? If the writer is Imam al-Shafi'i [for instance], expert in the [science of the] Qur'an, most expert in *hadith* [science], just *sami'na wa ata'na*!** Do not debate!)

From this quote it is clear that Soni Parsono started in Indonesian (bold) and then continued in Javanese *ngoko* (non-italicized), moving from formal to informal styles. The switch from one style to another, from Javanese to Indonesian, tended to be unpredictable. However, three languages are mixed in this quote (Indonesian [bold], Javanese [normal] and Arabic [bold-italicized]) were obviously indexical of different information structures. It is apparent that he used Indonesian when he gave a fact (which is information available in a book), while he used Javanese *ngoko* to address his audience as if they communicated with each other at home). The insertion of an Arabic term like *sami'na wa ata'na* in the excerpt gave loaded the meaning of the speech with faith. Even though he quoted al-Ghazali, who is one of the most influential Muslim scholars to the *pesantren* community, his sermon, to a certain extent, was less representative of that community. This can

be seen from his language use. He tended to go directly to the main idea of al-Ghazali he was quoting. He did not present the literal text of al-Ghazali and translate it into Javanese or Indonesian. In this regard, he differed from Waluyo.

Parsono Agus Waluyo and Soni Parsono share commonalities. In terms of religious orientation, both are ideologically linked to the NU. Both of them delivered



Ustadh Soni Parsono. *Photo reproduced from Majlis Al-Hidayah calendar 2014.*

sermons in two main languages, Indonesian and Javanese but in different measure. Arabic popped up for specific Islamic terms and quotations. Similarly, their sermons were situated within various preaching events, and they used the same styles, ranging from *kromo* to *ngoko*, formal and informal.

#### 4.2 Examples of studio radio sermons

Now we move to the second example, which is a studio sermon. It is taken from *Ustad On Air* aired by MTA FM and featured Ahmad Sukino. This is, as the name indicates, an on air program held within the studio, which is different from *Jihad Pagi*. This program also broadcasts on MTA TV.<sup>21</sup> It is aired on Wednesday twice a month. During this session, Ahmad Sukino was accompanied by a broadcaster and an assistant who helped him to read the Qur'anic verses and their translation.

As I said earlier, in a studio sermon like this, a preacher adopts a serious and formal style. In *Ustad On Air*, Ahmad Sukino gave a different performance than in *Jihad Pagi*. He presented himself as

a very serious speaker, speaking in a formal and monotonous tone. He spoke formal Indonesian with very rare insertions of Javanese words and idiom which gave an even more serious impression of the sermon. Qur'anic verses and *hadith* were the main sources for his sermon. It seemed clear that in his sermon, cross-reference between these sources played a central role. This is in line with MTA's textual orientation and with the exegetical principle that is exclusively based on the Qur'an and *hadith*. After an introductory remark a question-answer session followed. He answered written questions from listeners and also live questions. As in *Jihad Pagi*, his answers to the written questions were structured, since they had been prepared beforehand. The questions the audience raised were not always concerned with the theme under discussion.

The sermon I want to present here is the one I recorded on 23 January 2013 and was on natural disasters. The theme was very timely since it touched on the flood disasters that had hit various regions in Indonesia, especially Jakarta and surroundings. The sermon started with a general introduction by Ahmad Sukino about the causes of natural disasters. The starting point was Q. 30: 41 which states that human beings are the causes of disasters on earth. He illustrated this verse with people's bad habits of throwing garbage into rivers and the construction of many buildings without considering water absorption. Considering this, Ahmad Sukino stated that the reason behind disasters was the human mentality which can only be remedied by a return to religion. He underlined the blessing that God has awarded to humans. For this reason, humans have to thank God in order to get more blessing from Him, otherwise, God will award them with sorrowing torments. This is in accordance with God's promises stated in Q. 14: 7. With reference to Q. 8: 53, Ahmad Sukino stressed that God's blessing will never change, but that it is humans who turn that blessing into ingratitude. During the whole session, he quoted Qur'anic verses and *hadith* to uphold his argument.

In describing the consequence of not warning others about the danger of their bad habits, Ahmad Sukino used a parable taken from a prophetic *hadith* about people on a ship. Some of them sit upstairs, while some others were downstairs. When those downstairs want to take clean water, they have to go upstairs. They think that always going upstairs is not a good idea. Instead, they think it better to make a hole in the wall of the ship in order for them not to disturb those upstairs and to take water more easily. Then they made the hole. The Prophet reminded us that unless this act is prohibited, all people will be in danger. All of them will sink to the bottom. After giving this parable, Ahmad Sukino conclusively explained the matter further as follows:

‘Maksudnya, kalau kita melihat suatu kemungkaran dan melihat suatu kerusakan, supaya yang lain itu mengingatkan, mencegah. .. Jika kamu melihat suatu kemungkaran, cegahlah dengan tangan, dengan kekuasaan, dengan kekuasaan. Mencegah, mengingatkan, dan melarang. Kalau itupun tidak bisa, ... Kalau kamu tidak bisa mencegah dengan kekuasaan karena ndak punya kekuasaan, ya dinasihati, dinasihati, didakwahi. Kalau itu pun tidak mempan didakwahi, tidak mau surut, ya sudah dengan hati. Tanda hatimu tidak suka dengan kemungkaran itu, kamu jauhi perbuatan. Itu menunjukkan kamu masih ada iman, walaupun kata Nabi selemah-lemah iman...’

(That means, if we see disobedience and destruction, some of us must inform [others] and prevent [from doing disobedience and destruction]. ... If you see disobedience, prevent [it] with your hands, with power, with power. Prevent, remind, and forbid. If even that is impossible, and you are unable to prevent [it] with power because you have no power, give [them] advice, advice and preach [to them]. If it is even impossible to preach to them and they persist [in doing disobedience and destruction], then [try to prevent it] with your heart. As a token that you do not like disobedience you keep away from it. It means that you still have faith, although, as the Prophet said, as weak as faith ...)

From the quote above, we can see how serious the style was that he adopted. The whole excerpt is in Indonesian. During the half hour of his talk, he very rarely used Javanese words. In his introduction I only counted one Javanese word '*wira-wiri*' to describe how people in the belly of the ship had to go back and forth in order to get water. The absence of humour added to this sense of seriousness.

Let us compare this sermon with the one delivered by a *habib* named Abu Bakar Fahmi Assegaf which was broadcasted on Al-Hidayah FM in the program of *Sirah Nabawiyah* (the prophetic biography). Fahmi Assegaf is of Hadrami descent and he graduated from a *ribat* of Zain bin Ibrahim Sumait, a Hadrami born in Jakarta in 1936 and who lives in Medina.<sup>22</sup> *Sirah Nabawiyah* is included in the *Kajian On Air* program, which also includes other two programs, *Halaqah Fiqh* (Islamic law session) and *Aqidah Islamiyah* (Islamic creed). Both *Ustad On Air* and *Sirah Nabawiyah* are aired live. As I said earlier, the radio sermons of this kind were delivered in a serious and monotonous style. In both *Ustad On Air* and *Sirah Nabawiyah*, the questions the listeners raised were not always connected with the theme under discussion. Both were delivered almost exclusively in Indonesian.

The sermon I am going to present here is taken from the one delivered on 7 June 2012. I myself went to the studio to observe and to listen to this sermon. This time the sermon was about the *isra'* and *mi'raj*, meaning the night journey and ascension of the Prophet. The theme was timely discussed, because it was in the month Rajab (the seventh month of the Islamic calendar) that the Prophet is said to have ascended to heaven. The sermon began with an introduction (*muqaddimah*) that lasted about 15 minutes. In his introduction, which was in fact the core of his sermon, Fahmi Assegaf explained various *hadiths* pertaining to the *isra'* and *mi'raj* taken from the *hadith* collection of Bukhari and others. But before that he told a story from *Al-Barzanji* that the Prophet



Habib Fahmi Assegaf delivering a sermon in the Al-Hidayah FM Studio.

*Photo by the author.*

was accompanied by Gabriel (Jibril). But then both were separated because the meeting would be only between Muhammad and Allah, and Gabriel was not allowed to accompany him. One of the experiences the Prophet had as told in the story was his meeting with the Prophet Moses. In the meeting, Moses suggested him to return to Allah for dispensation with regard to the frequency of the obligatory prayers, from fifty times a day down up to five times a day. He underlined that all these were Allah's *qada'* and *qadar* (destiny). He presented various views the Prophet had during the *isra'* and *mi'raj* journey by quoting from the prophetic *hadith*. One *hadith* has it that when the Prophet ascended to heaven, Gabriel showed him the wonderful lake called *Kauthar*.

Fahmi Assegaf then presented a *hadith* on the authority of Abu Dawud about people with claws who were scratching their own bodies. Gabriel explained to the Prophet that that was a parable for those spending others' wealth with injustice. Fahmi Assegaf

added some other *hadiths* relating to the *isra'* and *mi'raj* journey, and the virtues that could be taken from it. One of them is a *hadith* narrated by al-Tabrani from Hakim that the Prophet was taken to a palace in paradise provided for Umar bin al-Khattab, the second caliph. It is said in the *hadith* that whoever wants to have a palace like Umar bin al-Khattab's is recommended to read the Qur'anic chapter of Al-Ikhlās (Q. 112) at least ten or twenty times after every obligatory prayers. A question-answer occurred when Umar bin al-Khattab heard this *hadith*. He asked the Prophet, *idhan takthur qushuruna ya Rasul Allah?* (If so, then are our palaces so many?). Explaining this dialog between the Prophet and Umar bin al-Khattab, Fahmi Assegaf continued,

'Sayyidina Umar merasa nanti apa cukup kalau kita baca *qul huwa Allahu ahad* seratus kali, seribu kali, sejuta kali, maka istana kita di surga akan menjadi banyak. Maka dijawab oleh Nabi Muhammad *shalla Allahu 'alaihi wa sallam: Fadl Allah ausa'u min dhalik*, bahwa karunianya Allah itu lebih luas daripada istana-istana tersebut. Artinya, seberapa pun kita membaca daripada surat Ikhlās setiap kita selesai melaksanakan *salat maktubah*, salat yang diwajibkan oleh Allah, maka seluas itu pula karunia Allah akan lebih luas daripada istana yang akan kita bangun atau dibangun oleh Allah di surga kelak.'

(Umar bin al-Khattab was wondering that if it would be sufficient to read *qul huwa Allahu ahad*<sup>23</sup> one hundred times, one thousand times, or one million times, then our palaces in paradise would be many. Then the Prophet answered, '*Fadl Allah ausa'u min dhalik*, that Allah's grace is wider than that. That means that how many times we read the chapter al-Ikhlās after *salat maktubat* (obligatory prayers), Allah's grace will also be more than the palaces we will build or will be built by Allah in paradise.)

Concluding the introduction, he said, 'May we implement the virtues of *isra'* and *mi'raj* and we make them our guideline in living our lives in accordance with the Prophet's exemplary



deeds.' Perhaps, there was not much to comment. The sermon was highly serious. During the whole sermon, he predominantly used Indonesian, just like Ahmad Sukino did in the one he delivered in the *Ustad On Air* program. However, the frequent use of Arabic words was important to his sermon not only for quotations but also to emphasize certain points in his explanation as can be seen in the excerpt above (italicized). He consistently accompanied Arabic quotations with Indonesian literal translations before he explained them. Although the translation is in Indonesian, it somehow resembles the Javanese interlinear translations in the texts used in the *pesantren* tradition. During his sermon, this kind of emphasis appeared many times. For instance, when explaining the direct meeting of the Prophet with Allah, Habib Fahmi emphasized that this meeting took place without cover (*bila hijab*). How could this happen, Fahmi Assegaf asserted, was *wa Allahu a'lam* (only Allah knows best), because this was already *fi hadrat Allah* (in the presence of Allah). No doubt, the constant use of Arabic terms added the authoritative dimension of his sermons.

The next studio sermon is the one delivered by Abu Khonsa, a salafi *ustadh*, and was broadcasted live on Suara Quran FM. Unlike the two studio sermons above, there was no question and answer session in this program. The main language used was Javanese, while Arabic appeared in Qur'anic and *hadith* citations and specific terms. It is interesting that Abu Khonsa used both *kromo* and *ngoko*, besides Indonesian. The sermon I discuss here was about the establishment of Allah on His '*arsh* (Throne) and *perdukunan* (sorcery or charlatanism).<sup>24</sup> He opened the sermon with the obligation for Muslims to believe in whatever Allah and His messenger have commanded without having any doubt. Included in this belief is that Allah is established on His '*arsh* in heaven. With this belief, he continued, Muslims need not to be confused about where Allah is. The belief in the '*arsh* itself is shared by other Muslims, but the literal interpretation of '*arsh* was



what Salafis like Abu Khonsa want to emphasize. In the Ash'ari doctrine, Allah is believed to exist everywhere, in other words, he is omnipresent. For Salafis, this is not so, since it contradicts the Qur'an which says that Allah is firmly established on His 'arsh. His literal view is expressed as follows:

*'Bilih kulo lan panjenengan sami dados muslim, dados tiyang ingkang ngrasuk agami Islam nggadai kuwajiban pitados, **meyakini** menopo kemawon ingkang dipun khabaraken, dipun dawuhaken Allah soho nabinipun. Dados menopo mawon ingkang dipunkhabaraken, dipundawuhaken Allah soho nabinipun meniko mesti leres, meniko mesti leres, meniko kedah kito **yakini**, kito kedah pitados, pitados kanti sak yektosipun, mboten pareng mamang-mamang, ... **gak boleh ragu walaupun sedikit**. Kalebet aqidah, ... kaum Muslimin ... kedah **meyakini** bilih Allah SWT meniko manggen wonten '**arsy**ipun, wonten sak nginggilipun langit, wonten sak nginggilipun sedanten makhlukipun'.*

*(We, Muslims, the ones who entered Islam, have the obligation to believe, **believe** in whatever is narrated, is told by Allah and His messenger. Thus whatever is narrated, is told, by Allah and His messenger must be true. That must be true. In that we have to **believe**. We have to believe with sincerity, without any doubt... **no doubt at all**. Included in '**aqidah** ... is that Muslims must **believe** that Allah is established on His '**arsh**, above heaven, above all His creatures...)*

As we can see from this excerpt, the Javanese language (italicized) is very dominant, while Indonesian (bold) and Arabic (bold, italicized) are hardly used. This might contradict the general expectation that a Salafi preacher would use many Arabic words and terms when he delivers his sermons. In fact, Salafis also adapt to the local context and take their audience into consideration. To discuss this subject further, Abu Khonsa went on to deal with a *hadith* narrated by Mu'awiyah bin al-Hakam al-Sulami upon which the true '*aqidah* on the establishment of Allah on His '*arsh* is based. The *hadith* is about Mu'awiyah bin al-Hakam al-Sulami and his

female slave. It is said that al-Sulami had entrusted many sheep to his female slave. One day, he saw one of his sheep being take away by a wolf. Knowing this, al-Sulami was angry with his slave and hit her without telling her why. Al-Sulami regretted what he had done and he went to the Prophet to report his wrong doing to his slave. The Prophet thought this a serious case. '*O the Prophet, do I have to free my slave?*' ('*Wahai Nabi, mengapa kula kedah merdekakaken, mbebasaken, budak kula wau?*') al-Sulami reported to the Prophet, who answered, 'Bring her to me! Present her to me' ('*Gawanen rene budak kuwi, sowano ana ing ngarsaku*'). With his slave, he came to the Prophet again. This time the Prophet interrogated her.

'Where is Allah?' ('Allah kuwi ning endi?')

'Allah exists above the heaven' ('Allah wonten sak nginggile langit').

'Who am I?' ('Sapa Aku iki?')

'You are the messenger of Allah, o the Prophet' ('*Panjenengan menika utusanipun Allah, wahai Nabi*').

Listening to her answers, the Prophet told al-Sulami, 'Free [her]. Indeed she is a true female believer'.

As can be seen from the dialog above, Abu Khonsa differentiated *ngoko* (non-italicized) and *kromo* (italicized) for the dialog between the Prophet and al-Sulami and between the Prophet and the slave. To represent the Prophet's speech, he spoke in *ngoko*, while for his companions (al-Sulami and his slave), he spoke *kromo*. This clearly demonstrates how a preacher like Abu Khonsa situated the hierarchical positions within his own narrative. The inclusion of different speech styles in a dialog or a narrative like this was common in many Javanese sermons, regardless of the preacher's social status or even his ideological orientation. According to Keeler, this kind of representation is absent in serious sermons (Keeler 1998: 38). However, the example of Abu Khonsa tells us the opposite to what Keeler has observed. His sermon cannot be considered as entertaining, since there is no humour in it. It is very serious since he brought only the Qur'an and *hadith* to audience.

#### 4 Concluding remarks

I have touched upon the languages used in radio sermons, the contexts in which sermons were broadcasted on radio, and how they were delivered. Some concluding remarks can be made. The first is concerned with the languages of the sermons. Almost all studio sermons broadcasted on *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta were delivered in Indonesian. Those in Javanese were very rare. I was surprised that in Surakarta, only Salafi *dakwah* radio stations, including Suara Quran FM, Al-Madinah FM, and Darussalaf FM, air sermons in Javanese. Of them, Suara Quran FM has a Javanese studio sermon program.

Indonesian dominated studio radio sermons, and, as can be seen from the two examples of the sermons delivered by Ahmad Sukino and by Fahmi Assegaf, Javanese was very rarely used. It can be assumed that the domination of Indonesian in studio sermons is related to the fact that the targeted listeners were not only Javanese speakers. It can also be assumed that the decreasing competence in Javanese has affected the availability of preachers competent in Javanese. Different from studio sermons, external sermons were dominated by Javanese language and idiomatic expressions. They were delivered in various contexts such as during life cycle events, Islamic celebrations, and organizational events. Radio preachers tended to switch from *kromo* to *ngoko* or the other way around. My analysis of the micro-shifts in the language use in the quotations above demonstrates how a preacher used code-switching to mobilize narrative resources by making them indexical of ideologies, identities, and authorities. From this point, I disagree with Keeler who views that a preacher who uses a serious style 'persisted in his use of high Javanese throughout his remarks' (Keeler 1998: 38). I myself have never seen a preacher speaking purely in *kromo* and in a serious style. Modernists like members of the Muhammadiyah or Persis may be compared with

their puritan co-religionist Salafis or, in the case of Surakarta, MTA members. They share some commonalities, including the call to a return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah, and their critical attitude towards traditions or more specifically toward a 'Javanese form of Islam', to borrow Keeler's words. However, this fact does not mean that preachers who embrace the 'reformist [modernist] version of Islam', Muhammadiyah and Persis members, or the 'revivalist'<sup>25</sup> vision like MTA and Salafis consistently spoke in high Javanese only. A Salafi preacher from Suara Quran FM, as discussed above, even mixed *kromo* with *ngoko* in order to produce contrastive effects in representing different subjects within a narrative (in this case between the Prophet and his companions). What is important to note is how preachers claimed their religious authority through their use of the Javanese language. In this regard, I argue that religious orientation or ideology plays a significant role in the way a preacher claimed authority. A traditionalist preacher like Parsono Agus Waluyo, for instance, tended to use the Javanese idioms widely used in *pesantren* community. Waluyo's educational background made it easy for him to use those *pesantren* idioms. This is different from Soni Parsono who has no *pesantren* background, despite of his traditionalist orientation. Differently, Ahmad Sukino's puritan orientation guided him to strictly refer to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He preferred to speak predominantly in Indonesian in his studio sermons and mixed Indonesian-Javanese in his external sermons. All this gives us a picture of how authority was constructed through language use.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Interview with Gun Gun Abdul Ghofur, radio preacher of MH FM, Sukoharjo, 25 December 2013.
- <sup>2</sup> See Snodden (2006) for further information on Jakartan Indonesian (*bahasa gaul*).
- <sup>3</sup> Some translators of Ibn 'Ata' Allah like Muhammed Nafih Wafy (2010) used 'al-Iskandari' instead of 'al-Sakandari'. I use 'al-Sakandari' which is popular in Indonesia, and Sherman Jackson also uses it (2012). Apart from that, it is close to Arabic publications.

- <sup>4</sup> Interview with Abu Ahmad Rahmat, Surakarta, 27 March 2014.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://mtafm.com/v1/archives/3548> (accessed 23 June 2014).
- <sup>6</sup> Interview with Novel bin Muhammad al-Aydrus, Surakarta, 17 January 2014.
- <sup>7</sup> The text of the broadcasting law can be found at <http://www.kpi.go.id/download/regulasi/UU%20No.%2032%20Tahun%202002%20tentang%20%20Penyiaran.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2015).
- <sup>8</sup> The text of the regulation can be found at [https://mgmpjawapemalang.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/perda\\_no-\\_9\\_th\\_2012.pdf](https://mgmpjawapemalang.files.wordpress.com/2013/01/perda_no-_9_th_2012.pdf) (accessed 12 May 2015).
- <sup>9</sup> The text of the regulation can be found at <http://kepri.kemenag.go.id/file/file/Perpu/dmnl1391675839.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2015).
- <sup>10</sup> For a further discussion on this, see Errington 2000: 205-27.
- <sup>11</sup> Radio broadcaster of Al-Hidayah FM, Asshidiq Ramadan said, 'As for language, Indonesian is not a must, but in order to reach more (listeners), there should be a language understandable to them'. Personal communication with Asshidiq Ramadan via Facebook, 14 April 2015.
- <sup>12</sup> According to Ali Mahfuz (1983), although knowledge of the Qur'an and the *hadith* is a must, command of Arabic is not.
- <sup>13</sup> <http://mantan-siswamta.blogspot.nl/2012/11/menuntut-ilmu-dengan-benar.html> (accessed 18 June 2014).
- <sup>14</sup> For the text of Baasyir's full sermon see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LR3iypCOJGU>; and [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=547B\\_zG-fY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=547B_zG-fY) (accessed 23 June 2014).
- <sup>15</sup> Interview with Novel bin Muhammad al-Aydrus, Surakarta, 17 January 2014.
- <sup>16</sup> *Jamuro* stands for Jamaah Muji Rosul (Group for praising the Prophet). It is for men. *Jamuri* stands for Jamaah Muji Rosul Putri (Female Group for praising the Prophet).
- <sup>17</sup> On *dakwah* and local cultures and the role of *Walisongo*, see Kees van Dijk 1998: 218-235.
- <sup>18</sup> So far, ten CDs of his sermons have been made available, and they are often sold during his sermon journeys. It is based on these CDs that Radio Pitutur Luhur regularly airs Parsono Agus Waluyo's sermons.
- <sup>19</sup> Personal communication with Parsono Agus Waluyo, Karanganyar, 20 September 2013.
- <sup>20</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEm\\_znQCox4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EEm_znQCox4) (accessed 23 June 2014).
- <sup>21</sup> Some can be watched via YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/OfficialMTATV>. For the sermon under discussion, see [http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=2o-JlIpWyHQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=2o-JlIpWyHQ) (accessed 20 June 2014).
- <sup>22</sup> About Zain bin Ibrahim Sumait, see [http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/زَيْن\\_بن\\_سمِيط](http://ar.wikipedia.org/wiki/زَيْن_بن_سمِيط) (accessed 29 July 2014).
- <sup>23</sup> In Indonesia, *qul huwa Allahu ahad* or *qul huwa Allah* is the popular name for Q. 112.
- <sup>24</sup> The record is available at [https://archive.org/details/ustadz\\_abukhonsa\\_000](https://archive.org/details/ustadz_abukhonsa_000) (accessed 29 July 2014).
- <sup>25</sup> Merle Ricklefs (2012: 515) defines 'revivalist' as 'one who, or that which, adheres to Revivalism', and 'Revivalism' as 'an approach to knowing Islam which denies that the four Sunni Schools of Law are authoritative guides and which aspires to revive a pristine universal Islam as in the time of the Prophet and his companions'.

## CHAPTER SIX

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# RADIO *FATWA*

## ISLAMIC *TANYA-JAWAB* PROGRAMS<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

In chapters four and five, I have examined some important aspects of the religious authority of radio preachers related to voice and language. In this chapter, I move to the question how radio preachers exerted their religious authority over listeners. While chapter five touches upon the empirical aspects of preaching practices, the present chapter deals with the emerging practices of issuing religious advices (*fatwa*). I focus on Islamic question and answer (*tanya-jawab*) programs broadcasted on the radio. My specific attention goes to MTA FM's *Jihad Pagi* program. Here, again, by using Ahmad Sukino as an example, I aim to show how the practices of issuing *fatwas* played a significant role in the construction of religious authority. The *fatwa* I choose is about eating dog meat. Through this example, I will not only deal with the role of *dakwah* radio in the development of *fatwa* practices in a Muslim society. I will also point out the fact that issuing *fatwas* has become a battlefield in the competition for religious authority.

Ahmad Sukino's *fatwas* on eating dog meat are only one issue that triggered controversy, as I mentioned earlier in chapter four. In fact, similar *fatwas* are also controversial, like the *fatwas* on the permissibility of eating *tokek* (gecko), *kadal* (lizard), *bekicot* (edible snail), *biawak* (monitor lizard), *kodok* (frog), *tikus* (rat), and *kelelawar* (bat). *Fatwas* on these issues are too general.<sup>2</sup> As will become clear later, the choice of *fatwas* on eating dog meat is based on the specific contexts in Surakarta.

A large number of studies on *fatwas* in Indonesia have been written both by Indonesian and Western scholars (Hooker 2003; Mudzhar 1990; Hosen: 2004; Gillespie 2007). The state-of-the-art of Indonesian Islam scholarship confirms Hallaq (1994: 30-31) who argues that 'there is massive evidence in our sources to indicate that *fatwas* played a considerable role in the growth and gradual change of Islamic substantive law'. At the same time, it has invalidated Tyan's observations (1991: 866) that the practice of *fatwas* will become obsolescent in line with the introduction of European law systems into the Muslim world. The participation of traditionalist Muslim organizations such as NU in *ifta'* activities<sup>3</sup> has also invalidated Deliar Noer's statement (1978: 300), 'The traditionalists in Indonesia were following the established *fatwa* rather than the method of arriving at the *fatwa*'. The traditionalists have formulated their own method of issuing *fatwas*.

Many writers on *fatwa* in Indonesia use the concept of *fatwa* loosely. Hooker (2003), for instance, provides various themes and employs a vast number of sources he considered as *fatwa*. Hooker divides his sources into six according to the number of the *fatwa* institutions under study: NU, Muhammadiyah, Persis, MUI, Ministry of Health (Bureaucratic *Fatwa*), and Badan Kerja Sama Pondok Pesantren (Cooperation Body of Pondok Pesantren). He includes a subsection for the Ministry of Health, Council for the Evaluation of Health and Islamic Law, and identifies its Islamic legal consideration as 'bureaucratic *fatawa*'. By bureaucratic

*fatawa*, he means ‘a diverse set of publications put out by ministries that have committees or councils for ‘the evaluation of Islamic law’ with reference to the activities of the ministry’. Specifically, he analyzes various *fatwas* concerning health issues produced by the Council for the Evaluation of Health and Islamic Law in the Indonesian Ministry of Health. The inclusion of the council is debatable. If the legal decision of this council can be called *fatwa*, can a legal decision of the *shari’ah* advisory boards in non-governmental banks be called *fatwa* as well? Whatever the answer might be, this clearly demonstrates that what can be considered a *fatwa* by a writer is depends very much on what elements and perspectives he or she includes within and excludes from the rubric ‘*fatwa*’. The degree of authority and strength of a *fatwa* is contingent in the sense that it is determined by many factors such as the degree of its acceptability by Muslims (to obey the *fatwa*) or the State (to implement the *fatwa* in State decisions). The criteria of the authority of a mufti or a *fatwa* institution are not only determined by religious or political factors, but also to a certain degree by consensus among its makers and that of the reception of Muslims as its askers. Thus, sociological factors are determinant as well in the acceptability of *fatwa*.

The role of modern media in disseminating *fatwas* is very important. Talking about radio mufti in Yemen, Messick (1996: 310-320) starts with his critique of Western biases as reflected in Lerner’s *The passing of traditional society* (1964) in which Lerner views the mass media, especially radio, as an ‘advancing secular trend’ (Lerner 1964: 56). By dealing with the issuance of *fatwa* through radio, Messick tries to bring this to the fore as a religious trend. However, Messick concluding remark runs as follows: ‘the voice is no longer that of the mufti himself but that of a professional broadcaster’ (Messick 1996: 320). In my opinion, by saying so, Messick fails to prove his critique and even would seem to agree with Lerner. He fails because he does not take seriously



the religious trend he promises in the beginning of his article. He does not clearly identify what this religious trend means in connection with radio *fatwa* and mufti, whether it is the content of radio broadcasting or the result of broadcasting activities. Implied in his concluding remark is the result of broadcasting activities. Nevertheless, this result is not necessarily that the Islamic sermon of the radio mufti is less or even not influential to listeners, since it depends much on their success in convincing their listeners. More importantly, Messick does not deal with the socio-religious and political context in which radio *fatwas* are broadcast. Consequently, he does not inform us about the radio mufti's endeavours in mobilising and convincing his listeners about a certain interpretation of Islam he believes to be true. My focus is different from Messick's. While Messick is concerned with the muftis, I focus on the Islamic programs called *Tanya-Jawab* broadcasted on radio.

This chapter examines the role of *dakwah* radio in the development of *ifta'* institutions. I shall focus on the religious question-answer (*Tanya Jawab*) program called *Jihad Pagi* broadcast on MTA FM Surakarta.<sup>4</sup> I shall delineate the socio-religious and political context of a *Tanya-Jawab* session. Taking the contemporary development of *fatwa* discourses into consideration, I shall also deal with the very nature of *fatwa*, specifically in relation to *dakwah* radio. I argue that *dakwah* radio is important to the current scholarship on *fatwa* in Indonesia.

## 2 Islamic *tanya-jawab* programs: Radio *fatwa*?

### 2.1 Conceptualizing *fatwa*

In this chapter, I use the concept of *fatwa* to comprehend the *Tanya-Jawab* program genre broadcast on a *dakwah* radio station. One might wonder if this genre can be categorized as *fatwa*, since the practitioners who offer Islamic advices on various themes to

listeners are to my knowledge, in the Indonesian context, not commonly considered ‘muftis’. They are mostly *ustadh*, *muballig* (itinerant preacher), or *da’i*. Some of them have not been trained in *madrasah* or *pesantren*. Having this in mind, the question of the nature of *ifta’* within the *Tanya-Jawab* program is understandable: Can *Tanya-Jawab* programs broadcast on the radio be considered *ifta’*? If so, what should be the basic assumptions? I argue that these programs can be understood as *fatwa* or part of *ifta’*. Several assumptions underlie my argument. First, the concept of *fatwa* itself has changed over time, irrespective of the fact that there is continuity in some *fatwa* aspects.

*Fatwa*, which stems from the root *f-t-w* or *f-t-y* (al-Zawi n.d.: 447), is often simply translated as ‘formal legal opinion’ or ‘Islamic legal edict’. In Indonesian, the term is used very loosely. In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Official Dictionary of the Indonesian Language), *fatwa* means: 1) an answer (decision, opinion) given by a mufti concerning a particular problem; 2) admonition of a learned man (Ind. *alim*, Ar. ‘*alim*’); good lesson; advice (*petuah*).<sup>5</sup> As a generic term, Muslim authors tend to define the concept of *fatwa* in its loose meaning which, more or less, refers to the forms of question and answer in Islamic legal matters. Al-Raghib al-Asfahani (d. 1108) (1985: 373) defines *fatwa* and *futya* as ‘answer to difficult legal questions (*al-jawab ‘amma yushkil min al-ahkam*). Al-Shatibi (d. 790/1388) (1985: 68) puts forward that *fatwa* has the same meaning as *ifta’*, an act of informing non-binding Islamic law (*al-ikhbar bi-hukm al-shar’ la ‘ala wajh al-ilzam*). In defining *fatwa*, Mahmud Shaltut (d. 1963), a modern Egyptian mufti and the former rector of Al-Azhar University, refers to related Qur’anic verses in which there are two kinds of answers, some not preceded by questions and the others preceded by questions. According to Shaltut, the term *fatwa* applies to the second. Moreover, Shaltut distinguishes between *al-istifta’* and *al-su’al*. The former needs a meticulous effort in creating an opinion (*diiqqah fi ibda’ al-ra’y*),

while the latter does not need it (Shaltut 2004: 9). Al-Qaradawi (b. 1926) (1989: 11), another distinguished modern mufti, defines it as ‘an explanation of religious law concerning a certain case as a response to a question of askers ...’ (*bayan al-hukm al-shar‘i fi qadiyyah min al-qadaya jawaban ‘an su’ali sa’ilin...*). Except Shaltut, our sources cited here define the *fatwa* within Islamic legal matters.

Nevertheless, *fatwa* literature does not limit its scope to legal matters. It can also concern Islamic doctrine, economics, ethics and politics. The broad scope of *fatwa* has its roots in early Islam and can apparently be seen in modern Islamic discourses. Summarizing the conceptual history of *fatwa*, Muhammad Khalid Masud puts forward three different concepts, including the management of general information about Islam, providing consultation to courts of law, and the interpretation of law. The first concept has appeared in early Islamic history, when *fatwa* referred to ‘a question-and-answer process of communicating information about Islam’ and its subject was Islam in general. With the establishment of Islamic schools of law and the compilation of legal literature, the term *fatwa* came to apply to legal matters not covered in *fiqh* books. In line with the emergence of new Muslim States, *fatwas* became more and more institutionalized, and muftis were incorporated into the state. Furthermore, Masud (1995: 8-10) suggests that ‘in order to appreciate current trends and developments, *fatwa* today should be seen as a function of management and the communication of information’. Of course, Masud’s suggestion is too broad to the extent that *fatwa* can cover everything informative about Islam. For that reason, it should be added that the most distinctive feature of a *fatwa* is the fact that it is issued upon request. Compared to a *khutbah* (Islamic sermon),<sup>6</sup> a *fatwa* is more dialogic in the sense that there is a two-way communication between a *mufti* and a *mustafti* irrespective of the fact that the nature of that communication is asymmetrical

and hierarchical. A *khutbah* is oratorical rather than dialogical and is delivered to the crowd in the form of one-way communication.

The next is concerned with the requirements of a would-be mufti and engaging in *ifta'* which have been formulated in *adab al-mufti* literature. Although this literature tends to emphasize the mature, timeless, and ideal character of a mufti, it has undergone various significant changes. Al-Nawawi (d. 1277) mentions several conditions of a would-be mufti. He must be: an adult, Muslim, reliable, free of the causes of sin and defects of character, a jurist in identity, sound of mind, firm in thought, correct in behaviour and derivation and alert (al-Nawawi 1998: 19; as in Masud, Messick, and Powers 1996: 18). Contemporary muftis like Yusuf al-Qaradawi have set their own methods of issuing *fatwa*. Al-Qaradawi (1989: 107) acknowledged that he formulated his own method of *ifta'* after having read the methods of previous ulama in order to avoid blunders (*al-mazaliq*). The most significant change pertains to the absence of a *mujtahid mutlaq* (a jurist who is qualified to engage in absolute independent Islamic legal reasoning). Hallaq (1996) has demonstrated that throughout the history of the Sunni legal theory, especially after al-Shafi'i (d. 820), the mufti's qualifications had undergone some changes, of which the capacity to do an independent *ijtihad* was no longer required. *Ifta'* activities never ceased to operate. Changes took place in the way in which Muslim writers formulated the requirements behind *fatwa* issuance (Hallaq 1996: 33-43). These shifts in *adab al-mufti* manuals, as Alexandre Caeiro (2006) analyzed, are highly concerned with 'transformations in religious authority, subjectivity and agency'. These changes are also related to 'the shifting normative criteria that define the correct performance of a specific religious act ...' (Caeiro 2006: 661-85). In other words, the conditions and requirements have always been subject to changes in accordance with the normative criteria applied.

Looking at the Indonesian context, the practice of posing questions and giving answers about Islam not only refers to *ifta'* and *istifta'* or *fatwa* as a generic term. Other terms such as *keputusan* (decision) and *taushiyah* (admonition or advice) are also used, even more frequently. The Muhammadiyah, for instance, called its official legal decisions *Keputusan Majelis Tarjih* and the NU *Keputusan Bahtsul Masail* respectively. The term *taushiyah* is also more often used, by these two organizations and also by others. The MUI and the PKS are two organizations which more extensively use the term *fatwa* compared to others. Other similar terms are also used in publications, such as *Tanya Jawab Agama* (Religious Questions and Answers), *Tanya Jawab Islam* (Questions and Answers about Islam) and *Anda Bertanya, Ustadh Menjawab* (You ask, the Teacher answers). In view of the various terms the MUI uses, Moch Nur Ichwan (2005: 51-2) distinguishes between *fatwa* and *tausiyyah*. According to him, there are four major differences. First is that a *fatwa* is issued by a special commission (Komisi Fatwa dan Hukum, Commission for Fatwa and Islamic law), while a *tausiyyah* is not. Secondly, in theory, a *fatwa* is much stronger than a *tausiyyah*.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, a *fatwa* contains legal and dogmatic issues, while a *tausiyyah* covers social, economic and political ones. Lastly, the authority of a *fatwa* is much greater than that of a *tausiyyah*. This differentiation may be helpful to understand the MUI and its legal decisions. However, it may not be so when applied to other organizations, since most of them do not use the term *fatwa* specifically or exclusively. As I mentioned at the outset of this chapter, Hooker has used extensive sources he assumes as *fatwa*, but, in fact, only the sources from the MUI are commonly called *fatwa*. Perhaps, the term '*fatwa-like*', as used by Kaptein (2005: 7), is more suitable to designate these uncommonly-called *fatwa*.<sup>8</sup> Regarding its authority, *fatwas* are not always stronger than *fatwa-like* texts. In the case of the Muhammadiyah, for instance, a *Keputusan* issued by the Majelis Tarjih is more binding than *fatwa* (Anwar 2005: 38; Kaptein 2005: 7).

Thirdly, with the absence of a set of ideal requirements of a would-be mufti and engaging in *ifta'*, new conditions have enabled Muslims to continue *ifta'* institutions. Partly, these conditions have been created by new forms of communication mediated by new communication technologies. One of the telling examples of the media-driven fatwas is the *Tanya-Jawab* programs broadcast on *dakwah* radio. It should be noted that what is called a *fatwa* by researchers is not necessarily considered a *fatwa* by those practicing this kinds of question and answer communication. A mufti may also not identify himself/herself as a mufti, but his/her audiences would call him so. The inventors may thus be either researchers or audiences. By putting the radio-broadcasted *Tanja-Jawab* programs within the concept of *fatwa*, I assume that they can be considered, at least, as a continuation of this long-established institution, if not *fatwas* themselves. More importantly, *Tanya-Jawab* programs demonstrate how Islamic doctrines are embedded in Muslims daily lives and how they are mediated by modern technologies like radio. It should be noted that giving *fatwas* through the radio is not a new phenomenon. In the 1970s, Hamka (d. 1981) regularly issued *fatwas* through RRI (Radio of the Republic of Indonesian). Nowadays, these practices remain vital, regardless of similar practices that have become widely spread through new media.

## 2.2 Tanya-jawab programs

Nowadays, there is a wide practice of posing questions and giving answers on Islamic religious matters in Indonesia and they are published in various print and audio-visual and electronic media, such as Islamic magazines, television and radio stations, and the Internet. The term *fatwa* does not always appear clearly in these media. Print media mostly use other, similar terms, such as *Kolom Agama*, *Halaqah*, and *Kolom Tanya Jawab*. As far as *dakwah* radio is concerned, the term *fatwa* is only used on Salafi *dakwah* radio

stations in specific religious broadcast programs. These programs contain reproductions of Middle Eastern *fatwas* translated into Indonesian. For example, Suara Quran FM in Sukoharjo regularly broadcasts a program called *Fatawa Mukhtarah* (selected *fatwas*). It contains Indonesian-translated *fatwas* which have been selected from various *fatwa* books or from treatises written by Middle Eastern Salafi ulama such as *Majmu' fatawa wa maqalat mutanawwi'ah* by Bin Baz (d.1999) and *Al-Masa'il al-'ilmiyyah wa al-fatawa al-shar'iyah* by Al-Albani (d. 1999). To my knowledge, no Salafi activists<sup>9</sup> in Indonesia are issuing *fatwas*. They rely completely on existing Middle Eastern *fatwas*. This means that the ultimate authority of Salafi movements is entirely in the hands of their mentors in the Middle East (see, for instance, Hasan 2005: 73-92). However, some Salafi teachers maintain blogs that provide forums for Islamic questions and answers. Other *dakwah* radio stations have a plethora of question and answer programs on Islam.<sup>10</sup> What is interesting to note is that these programs are highly interactive, and questioners or listeners and *ustadhs* can communicate with each other by telephone or by sending an SMS (short message service). Radio Suara Quran provides a special program called *SMS-Berjawab* (Answering SMS), which replies to all not-yet answered questions. Most *dakwah* radio stations provide an On Air SMS service (*layanan SMS on air*). RDS FM has a program called *taushiyah*.

It is worthwhile to make some comparisons with the Yemen context as Messick has described it. First, these *dakwah* radio stations are mostly affiliated to various Muslim organizations and groups. However, the religious affiliation of their listeners or questioners is not easily identifiable. What is clear is that they can be both members of those organizations or groups or unidentified common Muslim listeners. Those giving answers to listeners can be both the leaders of the organizations or their deputies, depending on what programs they hold. Next, both women and

men are allowed to participate in the *Tanya-Jawab* program. Thus, *dakwah* radio stations in Indonesia have become a medium through which women can freely express their gender aspirations. They can pose direct questions about women matters such as menstruation and religious devotions specific to Muslim women. There is no gender division, even on Salafi radio stations. This is different from the Yemen Islamic radio. As Messick (1996: 316) has pointed out, although female listeners in Yemen can participate in posing questions to the radio mufti, al-Ghurbani, they can only ask through men or through al-Ghurbani's wife but not directly. In the Yemen case, the radio mufti consulted his personal library before answering the questions posed to him. This seems different from the *Jawab* givers in *dakwah* radio. Radio 'muftis' in Indonesia answer the questions promptly, based on their memory of the relevant Qur'anic verses or *hadiths* or the opinions of previous ulama. They may consult when they find it difficult to give direct answers. In MTA FM, for instance, the *ustadhs* often postponed their exact answers for some time until they found their textual references.

Most, if not all, *Tanya-Jawab* sessions on *dakwah* radio are well preserved both in recordings, on their websites and even in hard copies. MTA FM has very well documented *Tanya-Jawab*, either on its website, recordings, or printed publications. Its website provides textual sources in downloadable PDF files and mp3 recordings.<sup>11</sup> Of course, the recordings of MTA's *Tanya-Jawab* provide more details concerning the content and the process of giving *jawabs* (answers) than the websites and printed publications, which contain only the general content of the questions and the textual sources that were used for their answers. The printed textual bases are published yearly and arranged according to the themes dealt with in each *Jihad Pagi* session. In this regard, compared to other *dakwah* radio stations, MTA is the most advanced in taking advantage of the various modern media



at its disposal. As they are well documented, *dakwah* radio gives more data than radio *fatwa* in Yemen. As Messick has told us, it is impossible for *fatwa* questioners in Yemen to obtain a hard copy of the *fatwas* (Messick 1996: 318). An example of MTA FM with its *Jihad Pagi* program will demonstrate how the questions and answers on Islamic issues are dealt with and how they are disseminated on air. It will also show how significant these *Tanya-Jawab* programs are for understanding media *fatwas*. Before going into the subject, the following subsection gives a brief description of a *Jihad Pagi* program.

### 2.3 The Jihad Pagi program

In chapter three, I presented the profile of the MTA and MTA FM so that I do not have to repeat it here. I focus on one of its important broadcasting programs, *Jihad Pagi*. *Jihad Pagi* stands for *Pengajian Ahad Pagi* (Sunday morning Islamic study gathering). It is a main Islamic gathering MTA features every Sunday morning.<sup>12</sup> It has been established since the era of Abdullah Thufail, the founder of MTA.<sup>13</sup> With the establishment of MTA FM, *Jihad Pagi* has been broadcast lively. The recorded version of *Jihad Pagi* is relayed three times every day, consisting of *Jihad Pagi 1* (part 1) at 06:00-07:00, *Jihad Pagi 2* (part 2) at 14:00-15:30 and *Jihad Pagi Hari Ini* at 19:00-21:30 (part 1 and 2 relayed back in one session). The term *jihad* (lit. struggle) used for this gathering session is interesting, since it has become more widely used in Western media in its negative sense as violence and terrorism, especially after the 9/11 tragedy in the US in 2001. The situation worsened by the fact that after 9/11, bombings happened in various parts of Indonesia such as in Bali and Jakarta. In MTA's view, Islam does not acknowledge any form of terrorism, since it is in contradiction to Islamic teachings.<sup>14</sup> Ahmad Sukino, the leader of the MTA, said, 'Islam is equated with terrorism only by those who are anti-Islam. Those who are ignorant consider Islam identifiable with

terrorism. It is only those who lose sight who identify Islam with terrorism'.<sup>15</sup> Explaining how the MTA has collected donations, its website stated that there are two kinds of *jihad*, including *jihad bil anfus* (physical Islamic struggle) and *jihad bil amwal* (Islamic struggle through wealth). It can be understood from this view that for the MTA, *jihad* is more than a physical struggle, and that organizing *pengajian* is part of non-physical *jihad*.

Every Sunday morning, more than 5000-6000 Muslims from various regions in and outside Surakarta such as Surabaya, Bandung and Jakarta come to the *Jihad Pagi* session. Before the session starts, two sessions are held first, *Silaturrahim* and reading *Brosur*. In the *Silaturrahim*, MTA FM reporters (male and female) have interviews with several male and female participants while they await the Ahmad Sukino's arrival. In these interviews, the people are often asked how they learned about MTA FM, what they think about it and how they felt after they got to know MTA. Most of them knew MTA by listening to MTA radio programs, in addition to what they learned from their neighbors. They often expressed how fortunate and happy they were to have come to know MTA FM, as through it they understood that 'true' Islam was based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah. The *Silaturrahim* session has turned into a testimony forum for listeners. The next session is reading *Brosur*. A *Brosur* contains Qur'anic verses and *hadith* and their Indonesian translations, arranged according to specific themes on Islam. On average, it contains eight pages and ends in with a brief conclusion. It is regularly distributed during the *Jihad Pagi* session. The *Brosur* has existed since the early years of its establishment.

*Jihad Pagi* is an interactive program. Those present during the gatherings can raise their questions both in written form and directly to Ahmad Sukino. By and large, the questions are based on the *Brosur* and concern further clarification, but other questions may also appear naturally. Those who are absent can ask friends to ask their questions for them in this session.

In what follows, I shall illustrate how a question and answer session in a *Jihad Pagi* takes place. The example concerns the Islamic ruling on eating dog meat and the issue will be dealt with in depth. As this session cannot be separated from the so-called *Brosur*, I shall also touch upon this material and then examine what method of legal reasoning the MTA followed. A comparison will be made between MTA and Persis.

### 3 *Fatwa* on eating dog meat: An example

#### 3.1 *The contexts: Doctrinal and social*

I will start with a description of the contexts in which the session under discussion occurred. Why is the question on the Islamic ruling on eating dog meat important? And, what is the social context of the question? There were at least two contexts, one religious and doctrinal and the other social. Doctrinally, there have been many debates about the permissibility of having or living with dogs. The debates have been attributed to various prophetic *hadiths* that are anti-dog. For instance, according to one *hadith*, angels will not enter a home that has a dog. In another *hadith*, a container licked by a dog must be washed seven times, and the last one must be with pure soil.<sup>16</sup> For most Indonesian practicing Muslims, eating dog is religiously unlawful (*haram*). Since they are mostly followers of the Shafi'i law school, touching a wet dog skin or its saliva is forbidden. If they do, they must clean the parts of their bodies that had been in contact with a wet dog seven times, and one time they have to be sprinkled with pure soil. With regard to eating dog meat, except the Maliki, three *madhhabs* agree on its being unlawful. The Maliki scholars are divided into two groups: one considers it *makruh* (reprehensible) and the other *haram* (al-Jaziri 2003: 7). However, none of them considers it permissible. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr as quoted by al-Dasuqi (n.d.: 117) said, 'I don't know anyone in the (Maliki) school who considers eating dog meat permissible (*ibahah*)'.



A Rica-rica Guk Guk street stall. *Photo by the author*

A further explanation of these differing opinions is beyond the scope of this section. What I want to highlight is that this is the theological reason why eating dog meat has become a hot issue among society. Apart from doctrinal reasons, no less important is the fact that presently in Surakarta (and in Yogyakarta as well), many (street) food stalls sell various kinds of food made of dog meat such as *sate gukguk*, *sengsu*, *sate jamu* and *rica-rica jamu*. According to one source, some 1.500 dogs are slaughtered every day to supply these stalls.<sup>17</sup> This means that dog meat has a quite high economic value for some people in both regions (Surakarta and Yogyakarta). According to a research by Kurniawan et al (2013) held in Pasar Kliwon district, the income of a *sate gukguk* seller in Surakarta can range from 300.000 to 500.000 rupiahs per day. The sellers are not only non-Muslims. A study by Abdul Karim et al (2011) on six *sate jamu* stalls in Laweyan district demonstrates that one of those stalls is run by a Muslim family. With the burgeoning of these stalls and the high demand for dog meat, the Agriculture Office (Dispertan) of Surakarta was worried about the possible spread of rabies virus among the people caused

by wrong slaughtering and cooking methods. The Aguculture Office of Karanganyar reported that some consumers preferred to eat half-cooked dog meat.<sup>18</sup> The Agriculture Office of Surakarta admitted that this potential spread was difficult to control.<sup>19</sup>

The names of the dishes made with dog meat are interesting by themselves, since they reflect Javanese local culture and norms. The word '*guk-guk*' refers to the barking sound of dogs. *Sengsu* is the abbreviation of *oseng-oseng asu*, which means 'sautéed dog meat'. The word '*asu*' here means dog, which in Java can be insulting if it is used for a person. Thus, the abbreviation is used to avoid sarcasm and impoliteness. The word '*jamu*' in such terms as *sate jamu* and *rica-rica jamu* is another important point to highlight, since it relates to the third aspect of this issue, namely the myths surrounding the consumption of dog meat. The Javanese word '*jamu*' means 'traditional medicine'. Some people believe that eating dog meat can increase stamina or sexual prowess. As reported by a local media in Surakarta, this belief attracts many people to consume dog meat.<sup>20</sup> It is within this context that the question about the Islamic legal status of eating dog meat popped up in the *Jihad Pagi* sessions and why it is important to discuss the issue.

### *3.2 Fatwa and its controversy*

Until now, no MTA document has been found that clearly states that eating dog meat is permissible (*halal*). The permissibility is mostly based on the personal understanding of audience. Whatever the case, it is clear is that the MTA has been criticized for having legalized eating dog meat. This becomes evident from the criticism of NU personalities like Marzuki Mustamar that I have discussed in chapter four. As quoted by *Suara Merdeka* daily, Ahmad Sukino has stated that Rohadi Abdul Fatah, an officer of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and a member of the NU, told a congregation in Banjarnegara, Central Java, that some MTA members sold dog meat. Sukino considered him as slandering the MTA.<sup>21</sup> According to

one newspaper report in *Harian Pelita*, Rohadi Abdul Fatah did not mean to insult the MTA. He just warned his congregation that there is a group of people in Surakarta who legalized the consumption of dog meat.<sup>22</sup> Some Salafis also criticized MTA's understanding of the legal ruling of eating meat in Islam by referring only to the Qur'an and rejecting the *hadith*. Salafis who were former MTA members implicitly state that there are people who still doubt the *haram*-ness of eating dog meat.<sup>23</sup> A Salafi in Cepu, Central Java, has made a list of twenty points where MTA deviates, one of which is the permissibility of eating the meat of savage dogs (*anjing buas*).<sup>24</sup> A Salafi writer, Abu Ibrahim 'Abdul Malik (2012: 53-9), criticized MTA's method of interpretation. According to him, MTA has misunderstood the Qur'an by paying no attention to the Sunnah.

To discuss MTA's *fatwa* more in detail, we may start from questions posed to Ahmad Sukino in the *Jihad Pagi* session. One of the questions concerning the Islamic ruling (*hukm*) on the consumption of dog meat reads as follows:<sup>25</sup>

*Question:* is dog flesh really *halal* or *haram*? Please explain [to me/us] as clearly as possible. Because in my kampong a *kiyai*, who memorized the Qur'an, made a comment before his *yasinan* congregation that: 'my ears become itchy when listening to this radio (station). It is said that dog flesh is *halal*, whereas even its saliva is *najis* (religiously impure), even it is said [that] its flesh is *halal*'. This comment came to my ears and spontaneously I said, 'Hopefully, his ears would forever be really itchy. Did [because of] my prayer lead me to be sinful?

This question reveals some important points. One concerns the terms *kiyai* and *yasinan*. Brought together, both terms might refer to a specific Muslim identity called *Nahdliyyin* which means followers of the NU organization, even though some followers of Muhammadiyah also conduct *yasinan* and call some of their leaders *kiyai*. MTA's criticism of popular traditions such as those maintained in the NU frequently causes tension between

followers of these two organizations, MTA and NU. In April 2011, a polemic appeared in the daily newspaper, *Koran Jawa Pos*, in Surabaya, East Java, involving the head of the executive board (*tanfidh*) of the NU and the general secretary of the MTA. The latter considered the former to have engaged in '*fitnah*' (false accusation) for considering the MTA to have banned *yasinan* and *tahlilan*. The polemic was triggered by Siraj's column entitled 'Menyikapi Kegarangan Puritanisme' (In Response to Aggressive Puritanism) that had been published in *Jawa Pos* daily. In this column, he described the tension between the followers of both organizations in Purworejo, Central Java (Siradj 2011).

As the answer to the question above was delivered in a highly informal form, it is difficult to present it completely here. The only way is to excerpt some relevant ideas from it. At least three main issues can be found in this session, including the charges or critiques raised against the MTA, the attraction of people to the MTA and the MTA responses to the charges as to the ruling on the consumption of dog meat. MTA regarded all the criticism against it with regard to the lawfulness of eating dog meat as *fitnah* (false accusation, slander), *dengki* (envy, jealousy) and *hawa nafsu* (passion). The charges were a form of *fitnah* because they denied the fact that the MTA had never declared that eating dog meat was permissible. They were jealous of the fact that the MTA attracted more and more sympathisers and many of them liked to attend *Jihad Pagi* sessions, even when they lived in remote provinces. The MTA regarded the criticisms as a kind of *hawa nafsu* to indicate the critics' desire to discredit and undermine the MTA in public. According to Ahmad Sukino, people's increasing fascination with the MTA was inseparable from the fact that the MTA provided them only with the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He used the metaphor 'menu' to describe the content of *Jihad Pagi*, which provides the audience with the authentic and fresh menu of 'the Qur'an and the Sunnah. He said,



‘... if you want to *ngaji* (J., meaning attending Islamic lesson), just come to [the MTA building in] the front of Mangkunegaran [Royal Palace]. The building is beautiful, isn’t it? It is [always] crowded ... The subjects of discussion all are explained in the *Brosur* along with the Qur’anic and the Sunnah texts plus a question-answer forum ...’

Furthermore, Ahmad Sukino tried to convince his audience that the MTA had never declared that eating dog meat was *halal* (lawful). In his answer to the question above, he repeated the same wordings several times, about seven times in this session. He frequently used the terms ‘*tidak pernah*’ (never) and ‘*tidak akan pernah*’ (will never) in order to counter his critics. Let us look at these seven wordings:

1. ‘Radio MTA will never state [that] dog meat is *halal* ... you will never hear [that]’<sup>26</sup>
2. ‘I declare: MTA never ... since its establishment, until ... *insha Allah* [God’s willing] forever ... will never say, never declared dog [meat] *halal*!’<sup>27</sup>
3. ‘Give me the proof! ... MTA never declared dog [meat] *halal*.’<sup>28</sup>
4. ‘MTA here is to study, deliver [the message of] the Qur’an and the Sunnah ... [to humankind]. It is unlikely to declare that something is *halal* or *haram* when it is not mentioned in the Qur’an’.<sup>29</sup>
5. ‘Don’t tell, ‘This is *halal*, this is *haram*, according to your own words without the authentic basis of the Qur’an. [If so], that means you are making a lie’.<sup>30</sup>
6. ‘MTA will never declare dog [meat] *halal* and will never declare [it] *halal*.’<sup>31</sup>
7. ‘*Halal-haram* is absolutely in the hands of Allah’.<sup>32</sup>

As can be seen, with the exception of numbers 4 and 5, the quotes directly concern the issue of eating dog meat. Numbers



4 and 5 tell about the textual doctrinal basis on which the MTA based its opinions. They clearly demonstrate that the MTA is not in the position to justify those who consider dog meat *halal*, and it based its opinion on the Qur'an. These repeated wordings seem to prove the MTA's consistent position in the debate on the Islamic ruling on eating dog meat. It is absolutely clear that MTA will never declare dog meat *halal*. However, there is one interesting point to note. That is the fact that the MTA never stated its opinion on the unlawful status of eating dog meat. This is also true if we look at the related *Brosur*, which is another important source about the MTA besides the recorded materials. Regarding the textual basis, the Qur'an seems to be the only source to decide both on the permissibility and the interdiction of eating dog meat in particular and food and what animals may be consumed in general. In the seven quotations above, the Sunnah appeared once, but not specifically one that speaks about food and animals. However, the Sunnah is one of the main subjects dealt with in MTA lessons. It seems to me that it is the absence of a clear declaration of *haram* on eating dog meat which is the fundamental reason why the MTA is charged of considering dog meat *halal*. By making no declaration on the *haram*-ness of dog meat, MTA leaves it open to the people to make their own interpretations and to draw their own conclusions. They, for instance, can make their interpretations by applying the principle *mafhum al-mukhalafah* (understanding a text through its opposite meaning) as in Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it may be that it is permissible to eat dog meat since the Qur'an neither mentions nor interdicts it. In view of the fact that the *Jihad Pagi* program is broadcast on radio and that the *Brosur* gives simply quite short explanations, audience or listeners have more freedom of making their own further interpretations or even misinterpretations.

It is worth asking whether MTA uses the principle of *mafhum al-mukhalafah*. In its *Jihad Pagi* session of 24 May 2009, Ahmad Sukino illuminated the concept of *bid'ah* by reference to the *hadith*

that says that the Prophet bequeathed only two things through which Muslims will be guaranteed to be save in the hereafter, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Sukino opined that the *mafhum al-mukhalafah* of this *hadith* is that any newly invented devotion to Allah, which is not mentioned in these two primary sources of Islam, should be considered *bid'ah*.

#### 4 Method of reasoning: Islamic principles on food

As noted above, although MTA does not declare the *halal*-ness of dog meat, it never declares dog meat *haram* as well. This fact seemed to open up the diversity of interpretations, especially for radio listeners. Mediated by radio medium, they were free to make their own interpretations. Their heterogeneous Islamic background and knowledge played significant roles in their reception. As also mentioned earlier, there has been no written or recorded MTA document that explicitly declares dog meat *halal* or *haram*. In the absence of such a document, it is wise to examine the method of reasoning the MTA used. This method can be inferred from the Islamic principles underlying its decision on the Islamic ruling on food. Therefore, I will elaborate these in two steps: explaining the Islamic principles on food the MTA held and the sources of the *Jawab*. In 2011, the MTA issued eleven numbers of its *Brosur* under the title '*Halal and Haram in Islam*'.<sup>34</sup> Nine numbers present eighteen points concerning the Islamic principles on food, animals, and differing opinions on food and animals. (Two numbers [10 and 11], which I will not discuss in this section, deal specifically with animal hunting.) These principles are mentioned in numbers 1-5 of the *Brosur*. I restructure those principles into ten as follows.

In the first principle with regard to food, the MTA follows the legal maxim that in principle all things are permissibility (*al-asl fi al-ashya' al-ibahah*).<sup>35</sup> Therefore, everything whose *halal* and

*haram* status is not explained in the principle (*asl*) should be considered *halal*.<sup>36</sup> This principle applies not only to things but also to acts, including *'adat* (local custom) and *mu'amalah* (social transactions).<sup>37</sup> In the case of *'ibadah* (worship), the MTA holds that there are two principles to follow: worshipping only One God; and this can be accomplished by abiding to what has been prescribed by the *shari'a*.<sup>38</sup> The source of *'adat* and *mu'amalah* is not *shari'* (the maker of *shari'a*, God), but human. Both are permissible except for those things that are clearly forbidden by the *shari'*.<sup>39</sup> Worship must be conducted in accordance with the *shari'a* as prescribed by God. By contrast, a custom must not be forbidden, except with a prescription by God.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, for the MTA, the decision on what is *halal* and what is *haram* is only in the hands of God. Those who dare to decide on *halal* and *haram* matters have transgressed God's limits and disobeyed God's right.<sup>41</sup> Humans thus have no power to make a decision in this matter. The only thing they can do is explain God's law. According to the MTA, 'our task is merely to explain the *hukm* ruled by God on *halal* and *haram*'.<sup>42</sup>

The third principle is that considering *halal* as *haram* and the other way around is a serious sin. This opinion is based on Qur'anic verses, including Q. 6: 116; 5: 103-104; 6: 143-144; 7: 32-33; and 5: 87-88. These verses are divided into *Makkiyah* (those sent down in Mecca), including Q. 6: 116 and 143-144; 7: 32-33, and *Madaniyah* (those sent down in Medina), including Q. 5: 87-88, 103-104. The *Makkiyah* verses were revealed to strengthen *'aqidah* (Islamic doctrines) and *tauhid* (monotheistic principles). In view of the purposes of the revelation of these verses, the MTA maintains that *halal* and *haram* are part of Islamic principles and not of that of its branches. It goes on to say that when some Muslims in Medina became excessive in their consideration of *halal* as *haram*, 'Allah sent verses which guided them back to the right path'.<sup>43</sup> Fourthly, to regard *halal* as *haram*

will cause difficulties;<sup>44</sup> this is because God's decision on *halal* and *haram* bears *maslahah* (goodness, interest) for humankind. Here it refers to Qur'anic stories concerning the prohibition ordained by God on Jews concerning the consumption of various foods and animals (Q. 6: 146 & 4: 161). With the coming of Muhammad as the last Prophet, that prohibition was abolished. This was and is, for the MTA a kind of God's mercy (*rahmat*) for humans.<sup>45</sup> Fifthly, whatever causes *haram* is *haram*.<sup>46</sup> Based on this principle, not only are the practitioners of *haram* acts sinful but also those who help them do to them. For instance, as in Islam *khamr* is *haram*, those who produce, bring (to others), give, and sell it are all sinful.<sup>47</sup>

The sixth principle is that any stratagem (*hilah*) concerning *haram* (i.e., to make it *halal*) is *haram*.<sup>48</sup> By the *hilah*, the MTA means 'naming something that is forbidden (*haram*) by using another name, and changing [its] form [into another], which is in essence the same'.<sup>49</sup> In line with this principle, the seventh principle is that good intention does not excuse *haram*.<sup>50</sup> *Haram* is *haram*, for whatever good intentions and purposes one might have.<sup>51</sup> Next, the eighth principle is avoiding *shubhah* (vague status of being *halal* or *haram*) for fear of being engaged in *haram*.<sup>52</sup> The ninth principle is that *haram* applies for all people,<sup>53</sup> since God's *shari'ah* transcends kinship, nations, races, and groups. The tenth principle is that an emergency excuses the forbidden.<sup>54</sup> This is translated from the Islamic legal maxim, *al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat*. The principle has its textual bases in the Qur'an (for instance Q. 2: 173; 6: 119) which put a restriction on the scope of *mahzurat* (the prohibited). According to MTA, all ulama agreed that in the case of food, famine is a *darurat* (emergency). Q. 2: 173 makes an exception by the phrase '*ghaira baghin wa la 'adin*' (without wilful disobedience, nor transgressing due limits). The *Brosur* reads, 'not to make any justification to meet his desire' (*tidak mencari-cari alasan untuk memenuhi keinginannya*).<sup>55</sup>

From these principles, it is clear that the MTA puts the authority of God over that of others. It tends to emphasize the universalities of Islamic law. As a consequence, it avoids particularities by returning them to the main source. This becomes much clearer when it faces the diversity of opinions of ulama on the Islamic ruling on food. The MTA acknowledges that there are different opinions among ulama concerning the Islamic ruling on food. It divides them into two groups. The first group considers that there are only four kinds of food declared *haram* by Allah, namely: meat of dead animals, blood, pork and the meat of animals that are slaughtered in the name of another than Allah (sacrificed not for Allah). In this respect, the MTA argues that the prohibition on food in the *hadith* is only *makruh*.<sup>56</sup> The term *makruh* means that if people eat these things, they do not sin but when they avoid it, they will deserve Allah's reward. By contrast, the second group maintains that except for the four *haram* foods mentioned in the Qur'an, what the *hadith* forbids, is not allowed to be eaten as well.<sup>57</sup> Towards this difference, the MTA seems to occupy an ambiguous position, since it chooses one of these two opinions only implicitly. What is clear is that the MTA bases its arguments on Q. 6: 145; 16: 115; 2: 173; and 5: 3. For the MTA, of these four verses, Q. 5: 3 is the most detailed. It says further as follows:

'Animals 'which hath been killed by strangling, or by a violent blow, or by a headlong fall, or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal' can be categorized as 'dead meat' (*maitah*), and 'that which is sacrificed on stone (altars)' is similar to those slaughtered in the name of another than Allah'. Both are the same. Shortly, globally (*ijmali*) [kinds of] food which are forbidden [to eat] consists only of four; and if explained in detail [that] would be ten, as stated in al-Ma'idah [5]: 3.<sup>58</sup>

In some ways, the MTA mentioned the dissent opinions of some ulama, but at the same time it did not identify them by

name or group. Rather than giving the names of some ulama or *madhhabs*, it tended to simply make a generalization by putting them into one group or the other. Consequently, we do not know, for instance, who the second group of ulama was the MTA refers to. The intention may have been to provide information as concise and clear as possible, since the *Brosur* is distributed to common Muslims, not to specialists. None the less, it may also be because of its non-*madhhab* orientation and thus by bringing all the differences back to the main sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *hadith*. The position of the *hadith* itself in the case of dog meat is not quite clear, so it is unknown whether it is an explanation (*tabyin* or *tafsil*) of the Qur'an as suggested by *fuqaha'* (Muslim jurists) and Muslim interpreters (*mufasssirun*). What is clear is that the MTA uses no *hadith* concerning the *haram*-ness of dog meat. It does not follow the *hadith* which says that every beast of prey with canine teeth is forbidden.<sup>59</sup> Inconsistently, however, MTA upholds its presumably Qur'anic-based principle on food and animal by citing the *hadith* narrated by Abu Darda', 'Whatever Allah has permitted in his book is *halal* and whatever He has forbidden is *haram* and whatever he is silent about is a forgiveness (*'afw*). So please take from Allah his forgiveness, since Allah never forgets anything'. Other, similar *hadiths* by other narrators are also quoted, which the MTA views as *da'if* (weak or unsound *hadith*).<sup>60</sup> According to Sukino, if there are *hadith da'if* (weak *hadiths*) with the same meaning as the *hadith shahih* (authentic *hadith*), the former serve to corroborate the latter.<sup>61</sup> However, the MTA does not employ this principle to those *hadiths* that explain in detail the kinds of unlawful animals not yet mentioned in the Qur'an.

MTA's opinion on eating dog meat is quite similar to that of *Soal-Djawab*, the key book of Persis in terms of its arguments as well as in terms of its textual bases. Although their conclusion is the same, they differ in making a conclusive statement. *Soal-Djawab* was co-written by Ahmad Hassan, Moh. Ma'shum and Mahmud

Aziz. Examining the legal thought of Ahmad Hassan, Minhaji (1997: 327) mentions Hassan's *fatwa* on dog meat. He views that this *fatwa* was influenced by Imam Malik, the founder of the Maliki School of law. Unfortunately, he neither indicates his source nor elaborates further on this topic. It might be because he could not find any reliable source he could use or he considers it taboo for discussion. Minhaji (1997: 327) said 'His *fatwa* that eating dogs is permissible is a clear example of his indebtedness to the ideas of Malik'. Reading two volumes of *Soal-Djawab*, one might not be able or have difficulty to find a specific theme on the Islamic ruling on eating dog meat. What one will find in there is the Islamic ruling on touching a dog and its saliva or selling a dog. Included in the *fatwa* on selling a dog and accepting payment is the explanation that dog meat may be consumed. However, this is not a *fatwa* given by Ahmad Hassan but by Mohammad Ma'shum, one of the co-authors of *Soal-Djawab*. This can be seen in the end of the *fatwa* where Md. Mm is registered. Md. Mm stands for Mohammad Ma'shum.

Ma'shum's opinion is not influenced by Imam Maliki. As he himself acknowledged, it follows the opinion of Imam Abu Hanifah. The question to which Ma'shum responds is as follows: 'What is the ruling on selling a dog and accepting payment?' In response to this, Ma'shum said, 'Concerning this, ulama have different opinions which are divided into three; here they will be explained one by one, in order for you, readers, to be able to consider'. Then a lengthy exposition is given of the three opinions and their textual bases. The first is that a dog is *haram* either to sell and for accepting payment. This opinion is held by most *fuqaha'* (*ahl al-fiqh*) and *ahl al-hadith* (*hadith* scholars). Similar to the first opinion, the second is that it is *haram* to sell a dog and take its payment except in the case of a hound which may be sold and for which accepting payment is allowed. This is the opinion of Imam 'Ata' and Imam al-Nakha'i. The third is the opinion that everything God has forbidden may not be sold and no payment may be accepted.

The third opinion is more general, since it includes everything forbidden by God, and not only dogs.

Ma'shum then moves on to the discussion about food. He said, 'According to the right information, food Allah has outlawed is what has been outlawed in his book, the Qur'an'. In the same way as MTA, he cites a *hadith* narrated by al-Bazzar on the authority of Abu Darda' mentioned above. To explain the terms *halal* and *haram* in this *hadith*, Ma'shum then quotes two Quranic verses, including Q. 2: 173 and 6: 145. Inferring from these Qur'anic verses, he said, 'therefore except these four things outlawed by Allah, everything is *halal*. If anything more [than these] is [considered] *haram*, [that] would be explained by Allah. Shortly speaking, with the explanation of these two Qur'anic verses, it can be inferred that *the animal called anjing may be sold since Allah does not interdict the consumption of its meat*' (italic mine). He examined all *hadith* texts in support of the first and second opinions by analysing the reliability of their narrators (*rawis*). I will not describe them here in detail. What is important to present is that Ma'shum comes to the following conclusion:

*Hadiths* that prohibit taking benefit from the price of dog mentioned in Nos. 3, 4, 5, [and] 15 are not acceptable, even if their *sanad* (chains of transmission) are authentic, because they oppose Quranic verses, and the *hadith* mentioned in No. 11 that explains that if Allah declares something unlawful, He declares them their price, whereas [eating the meat of] a dog is not forbidden by Allah. By this explanation, one can understand the weakness of the first opinion and the second one; one can also understand the authenticity of the opinion that it is allowed to sell a dog, and it is permissible (*halal*) to take its benefit. This is [the opinion of] the School of Imam Abu Hanifah (see A. Hassan, et al. 1969: 726).

It can clearly be seen from the above description that there are some similarities and some differences between the MTA



and the *Soal-Djawab*. Both agree in making Qur'anic pre-texts as the sole foundation for deciding the ruling on eating dog meat. The legal reasoning of both the MTA and *Soal-Djawab* is the same. With this in mind, the conclusion should also be the same. However, the context in which MTA's answer is given forced it to take a different way. The *Soal-Djawab* blatantly declares that eating dog meat is lawful, whereas MTA simply states that it will never consider dog meat lawful. More importantly, in this position, the MTA never condemns eating dog meat. On the one hand, it wants to be in tune with its commitment to following the textual meaning of the Qur'an as precisely as possible. But, on the other hand, social norms regarding the Islamic ruling on dog meat propel it to avoid commenting on its *haram*-ness. Compared to *Soal-Djawab*, the MTA seems to be reluctant to link its conclusion to the opinion of previous ulama by not mentioning their groups or their *madhahibs*.

## 5 Concluding remarks

In contemporary Indonesia, *ifta'* activities have never ceased to operate. Muslim organizations such as the Muhammadiyah, the NU and the MUI have continued to produce *fatwa* in response to a great array of problems Muslims face in the country. Modern communication technologies have become important media for the dissemination of *fatwa*. Outside the 'official' *ifta'* institutions, there are questions and answers on Islamic matters presented in and through various media, printed as well as electronic. They have taken different forms such as *Kolom Agama*, *Soal-Jawab*, *Tanya-Jawab Islam*, *Ustad Menjawab*, and *SMS-Berjawab*. I have dealt with these kinds of question and answer on Islam with special attention to *Tanya-Jawab* programs on *dakwah* radio. I have also made a case study of the *Jihad Pagi* program broadcast on MTA FM and a discussion about the Islamic ruling on food.

The concept of *fatwa* has changed over time. Islamic *Tanya-Jawab* programs broadcast on *dakwah* radio are important to understand how *fatwas* are disseminated through the media. Islamic *Tanja-Jawab* programs can be considered as part of *fatwa*. These programs give not only information about Islam, but also have become a forum where interpretation of Islam takes place. This can be seen in the discussion on the Islamic ruling on eating dog meat as presented above, in which the interpretation of Islamic law is highly contested. On the one hand, the leader of the MTA has to provide the askers not only with answers but also with the legal reasoning on which he bases his answers. On the other hand, he has to respond to critique or charges raised against his organization. Within this context, he seemed to face a dilemma and was forced to make a conclusion which actually opposed his method of reasoning. The theme of the discussion itself was not new, but the question about it was raised within the context of the real daily life of the Muslim asker.

As I have discussed in chapter four, the monological nature of radio communication played a significant role in shaping Ahmad Sukino's religious authority. It is evident in this chapter that the simple reasoning on a legal issue fit in with, and strengthened the monologism of the medium radio. The monological nature of the radio has empowered Ahmad Sukino to control the power of his *fatwas*. In the absence of written MTA documents that clearly legalize the consumption of dog meat, critics were forced to refer to what Ahmad Sukino has 'voiced' through his sermons. But the truth is not in the voice that is already transported into radio sound or any other recording medium. It is in Ahmad Sukino's physical voice. Therefore, his critics have to come to him to ask him for the truth of his *fatwa*. This is the essence of *tabayun* (asking clarification) that I have discussed in chapter four.

In the next chapter, I move to Salafi *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta. As I have stated several times, Salafis are among the stalwart critics of the MTA, regardless of their commonalities regarding the return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah and purification of religious practices. However, as will be clear, it is misleading to equate the MTA with the Salafi movement that has sprang up after the collapse of the New Order in 1998.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> This is an updated version of my article that appeared in *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 50-2 (2012): 239-278.
- <sup>2</sup> A YouTube view on these issues can be seen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ddDrQpBwdg0> (accessed 12 May 2015).
- <sup>3</sup> On NU *fatwa*, see Hosen 2004: 5-26; Laffan 2005: 93-121
- <sup>4</sup> I have discussed this radio and MTA in chapter three.
- <sup>5</sup> *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*, <http://bahasa.kemdiknas.go.id/kbbi/index.php>.
- <sup>6</sup> There have been a number of studies on *khutbah*, including: Pedersen 1953: 215-23; Antoun 1989; Gaffney 1994; and Tayob, 1999.
- <sup>7</sup> Ichwan (2005) does not explain what he means by the term 'stronger' in his article. He does not indicate whether a fatwa is stronger because of its binding effects on Muslims or because of its resulting decisions (either *haram*, prohibited, or *halal*, permissible, for instance).
- <sup>8</sup> Kaptein applies this term to texts concerning admonitions, position statements, appeals, or thought contributions, which resemble fatwa. See Kaptein 2005: 7.
- <sup>9</sup> On the *salafi* radio, see the next chapter.
- <sup>10</sup> It should be noted that Salafi *dakwah* radio stations have also this kind of *Tanya Jawab* program, besides fatwa programs.
- <sup>11</sup> From 2007 to 2011, they could have been downloaded free of charge. However, as of 1 January 2012 one has to subscribe in order to be able to access them. According to its administrator, this was done after 'having considered various needs and aspirations, and advice from various sides.' See [http://mtafm.com/v1/?page\\_id=3637](http://mtafm.com/v1/?page_id=3637) (accessed 8 January 2012).
- <sup>12</sup> [http://mtafm.com/v1/?page\\_id=43#comment-1473](http://mtafm.com/v1/?page_id=43#comment-1473) (accessed: 1 December 2011).
- <sup>13</sup> According to Dahlan HT, one of Abdullah Thufail's senior students, the *Jihad Pagi* session already existed since the early establishment of MTA.
- <sup>14</sup> Yayasan MTA, 'Terorisme dalam Pandangan Islam,' *Brosur* No. 1472/1512/IA, Sunday, 23 August 2009/02 Ramadhan 1430, p. 6.
- <sup>15</sup> See <http://mtafm.com/v1/?p=1320> (accessed 01 January 2012).
- <sup>16</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl has analyzed these anti-dog *hadiths*, the different opinions of Muslim jurists, and the relation of Islamic law with the nature. See El Fadl 2005.
- <sup>17</sup> See <http://www.solopos.com/2011/solo/minim-pengawasan-1-500-an-ekor-anjing-%E2%80%9Cdibunuh%E2%80%9D-untuk-sate-guk-guk-119666>; [www.jagoanberita.com](http://www.jagoanberita.com), 'Minim Pengawasan, 1.500-an Ekor Anjing 'Dibunuh' untuk Sate Guk-guk,'

- <http://jagoanberita.com/tampilkan/minim-pengawasan-1-500-an-ekor-anjing-%E2%80%9C9Cdibunuh%E2%80%9D-untuk-sate-guk-guk>. (Accessed 5 December 2011).
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.solopos.com/2014/09/25/sate-jamu-guk-guk-ini-bahaya-konsumsi-daging-anjing-kena-rabies-539066> (accessed 15 July 2015).
- <sup>19</sup> 'Fenomena Penjualan Makanan Olahan Daging Anjing di Solo, *Harian Joglosemar*, 25 July 2011; 'Pemkot Sulit Kendalikan Peredaran Daging Anjing,' *Harian Joglosemar*, 15 October 2011. Also 'Warung Daging Anjing Merebak, Dispartan Resah,' at [http://www.kabar7.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=318:warung-daging-anjing-merebakdispartan-resah&catid=5:daerah&Itemid=17](http://www.kabar7.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=318:warung-daging-anjing-merebakdispartan-resah&catid=5:daerah&Itemid=17) (accessed 5 December 2011).
- <sup>20</sup> 'Satu Guk-guk Diburu karena Mitos Jamu,' <http://harianjoglosemar.com/berita/sate-guk-guk-diburu-karena-mitos-jamu-49701.html> (accessed: 8 January 2012).
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.suaramerdeka.com/v1/index.php/read/news/2010/03/21/49808/Pejabat-Depag-Pusat-Dituduh-Lecehkan-MTA> (accessed 5 December 2011).
- <sup>22</sup> <http://www.pelita.or.id/baca.php?id=90854> (accessed 16 May 2015).
- <sup>23</sup> <http://mantan-siswamta.blogspot.nl/2012/09/masih-ada-yang-meragukan-haramnya-anjing.html> (accessed 16 May 2015).
- <sup>24</sup> <http://abumundziralgihfary.blogspot.nl/2014/09/penyimpangan-mta.html> (accessed 16 May 2015).
- <sup>25</sup> Recorded *Jihad Pagi*, 21 August 2011.
- <sup>26</sup> *Radio MTA tidak akan menerangkan daging anjing itu halal ... kamu tidak akan pernah dengar.'*
- <sup>27</sup> *'Saya katakan: MTA tidak pernah ... sejak MTA berdiri, .. insyaallah sampai besok ... tidak pernah akan mengatakan, tidak akan pernah menghalalkan anjing. Nggak pernah.'*
- <sup>28</sup> *'Buktikan! ... Nggak pernah MTA menghalalkan anjing.'*
- <sup>29</sup> *'MTA itu di sini mempelajari, menyampaikan al-Quran dan Sunnah Nabi ... Nggak mungkin akan menghalalkan sesuatu, mengharamkan sesuatu, yang tidak disebut dalam al-Quran.'*
- <sup>30</sup> *'Jangan kamu mengatakan 'ini halal, ini haram, menurut ucapanmu sendiri tanpa dasar kebenaran dari al-Quran. Itu berarti kamu mengadakan kebohongan.'*
- <sup>31</sup> *'MTA tidak akan pernah menghalalkan anjing dan tidak akan menghalalkan ...'*
- <sup>32</sup> *'Halal-haram itu mutlak milik Allah ...'*
- <sup>33</sup> On *mafhum al-mukhalafah*, see for instance, Khallaf 2002: 153-161.
- <sup>34</sup> They are: *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF (17 July 2011/15 Sha'ban 1432); *Brosur* No. 1564/1604/IF (31 July 2011/29 Sha'ban 1432); *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF (7 August 2011/7 Ramadan 1605); *Brosur* No. 1566/1606/IF (14 August 2011/14 Ramadan 1432); *Brosur* No. 1567/1607/IF (21 August 2011/21 Ramadan 1432); *Brosur* No. 1568/1608/IF (28 August 2011); *Brosur* No. 1569/1609/IF (4 September 2011/5 Syawwal 1432); *Brosur* No. 1570/1610/IF (11 Sept 2011/13 Shawwal 1432); *Brosur* No. 1571/1611/IF (25 September 2011/ 27 Shawwal 1432); *Brosur* No. 1572/1612/IF (2 Oct 2011/4 Dhu 'l-Qa'dah 1432); and *Brosur* No. 1573/1613/IF (9 October 2011/11 Dhu 'l-Qa'dah 1432).
- <sup>35</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 1.
- <sup>36</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 2.
- <sup>37</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 4.
- <sup>38</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 4.

- <sup>39</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 5.
- <sup>40</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 6.
- <sup>41</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 6.
- <sup>42</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 8.
- <sup>43</sup> *Brosur* No. 1564/1604/IF, p. 5.
- <sup>44</sup> *Brosur* No. 1564/1604/IF, p. 6.
- <sup>45</sup> *Brosur* No. 1564/1604/IF, pp. 7-8.
- <sup>46</sup> *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF, p. 1.
- <sup>47</sup> *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF, p. 1.
- <sup>48</sup> *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF, p. 3.
- <sup>49</sup> *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF, p. 3.
- <sup>50</sup> *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF, p. 5.
- <sup>51</sup> *Brosur* No. 1565/1605/IF, p. 6.
- <sup>52</sup> *Brosur* No. 1566/1606/IF, p. 1.
- <sup>53</sup> *Brosur* No. 1566/1606/IF, p. 2.
- <sup>54</sup> *Brosur* No. 1566/1606/IF, p. 3.
- <sup>55</sup> *Brosur* No. 1567/1607/IF, p. 2.
- <sup>56</sup> In *usul al-fiqh*, the term *makruh* means ‘what the *shari*’ (the maker of *shari’ah*, God) has order from *mukallaf* (the adult) not to do it indeterminately.’ See Khallaf 2002: 114. The MTA’s definition of this term is similar to that of Yusuf al-Qaradawi who says that *makruh* is ‘what deserves God’s reward for leaving it, and there is no punishment for doing it.’ However, what al-Qaradawi means here is *makruh tanzihi* (religiously lawful), not *makruh tahrimi* (strictly abominable). See al-Qaradawi 1996: 206.
- <sup>57</sup> *Brosur* No. 1568/1608/IF, pp. 1 & 8.
- <sup>58</sup> *Brosur* No. 1567/1607/IF, p. 5.
- <sup>59</sup> The hadith can be found in Maulana Muhammad Ali 2001: 291. Narrated by Abu Tha’labah, the hadith reads, ‘The Messenger forbade all beasts of prey with canine teeth’.
- <sup>60</sup> *Brosur* No. 1563/1603/IF, p. 2.
- <sup>61</sup> Recorded *Jihad Pagi*, 17 July 2011.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

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# SALAFI RADIO IN CONTEST<sup>1</sup>

### 1 Introduction

In chapter three I discussed one element of the Islamic discourse that is predominantly aired on *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta: the discourse on the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. Various Muslim groups and organizations have contested this current of religious thought. In this chapter, I will discuss Salafi groups and their engagement with *dakwah* radio. They claim themselves the true followers of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. The purpose of this chapter is twofold. One is to examine the development of the Salafi movement with special reference to Salafi radio stations in Surakarta. The second purpose is to consider their position vis-à-vis other groups, especially the MTA. By doing so, I hope to clarify how the contestation of the Salafi radio stations took place.

Little research has been done to explore how Salafis in Indonesia engaged with modern media. Robert Hefner (2003: 158-179) wrote an article on the role of the email as used by Laskar Jihad to mobilize its members in the conflicts in the Moluccas in eastern Indonesia. Merlyna Lim (2005a, chap. 6 & 2005b: 10-27)

has done a more comprehensive study on the role of the Internet as used by Laskar Jihad in the same conflicts. Various other writers mentioned this issue very briefly or only in passing. Pioneering in Salafi studies in Indonesia, Noorhaidi Hasan, for instance, although underlining the importance of the use of the media by Salafis, only devoted limited space for a discussion of the media. In his *Laskar Jihad* (2006), he discussed the important role the media played in the *jihad* struggle of the Salafis. He noted that radio played an important role in disseminating the *jihad* message in the Moluccas (Hasan 2006: 201-203). In an article he published in 2010, he briefly mentioned the role of Salafi radio. It is said that the increasing use of the radio as a medium for Salafi *dakwah* is a consequence of the Salafi's failure in their door-to-door campaigns (Hasan 2010: 675-705). Din Wahid, who wrote a dissertation on Salafi *pesantrens* in Indonesia, touched upon Salafi radio very briefly in a special subsection and he focused on two radio stations, Rodja in Cileungsi, Bogor, and Assunnah FM in Cirebon. He said that Salafis use the radio as one of their means to gain public hold (Wahid 2014: 102-5). Considering the lack of interest in the Salafi radio, this chapter will contribute to the existing literature on Salafism in Indonesia.

In what follows, I will discuss Salafi radio stations in Surakarta and their networks. This chapter attempts to answer two central questions: How can the currently available Salafi radio stations help us to understand the present-day development of the Salafi movement? The second question is how Salafism is received through radio? The first section will offer a brief account of the current development of the Salafi movement in Indonesia, and its relation to the present-day Salafi radio stations in Surakarta. Crucial to the Salafi movement is networking. The interconnection of one group with other groups plays a significant role in the Salafi *dakwah* movement. Therefore, the subsequent section discusses the network of the Salafi radio stations in Surakarta. In the next section, the discussion focuses on how the contestation over

‘true’ Salafism has taken place on Salafi radio stations. As will be delineated below, the contestation is complicated and involves various issues ranging from Salafi leadership to fundraising. An empirical account of the engagement of listeners with Salafi radio stations follows this section. Before coming to the conclusion, a brief discussion is given of the reaction of non-Salafis of MTA FM and Al-Hidayah FM.

## 2 A current map of the Salafi movement

As el-Rasheed (2007: 3) has noted, ‘Salafi’ is an elastic identity, for it can have several meanings. Therefore, a brief explanation of the term is needed. It stems from Arabic *salaf* (also pl. *aslaf*) and it means “predecessors, forbears, ancestors, forefathers” (Wehr 1973: 423). The terms Salafi, and Salafism refer to a specific group and movement characterized by its strict adherence to *al-Salaf al-Salih* (the pious ancestors of the Muslim community of the first three generations) and to the literal interpretation of the Qur’an and the *hadith*. Salafis aspire to emulate the way of life of the Prophet Muhammad as literally as possible. Salafism in this sense is different from the movement established by Muhammad ‘Abduh (d. 1905) and Rashid Rida (d. 1935) in Egypt that gives priority to the rational interpretation of the Qur’an and the *hadith*, and accommodates contemporary needs. The intellectual genealogy of the Salafism discussed here can be traced back to Ahmad ibn Hanbal (d. 855) (founder of the Hanbali school) down to Ibn al-Taimiyah (d. 1328) to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyah (d. 1350) to Ibn ‘Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1792) (founder of Wahhabism) to contemporary Middle Eastern Muslim scholars like ‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Baz (d. 1999), Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999), Muhammad Salih al-‘Uthaimin (d. 2001), Muqbil ibn Hadi al-Wadi’i (d. 2001). Although genealogically similar, Salafism is conceptually and historically different from Wahhabism, the official ideology of Saudi Arabia. Conceptually, Salafism is broader and historically much older than



Wahhabism. While the latter emerged in the eighteenth century, the former already existed in the early years of Islam.

Salafism is applied not only to Wahhabism but also to other Islamic movements whose main aim is to bring Islam back to its origins. In Indonesia, the Salafi movement emerged in the mid-1980s as a consequence of the transnational Salafi *dakwah* movement and gained public attention after the fall of the New Order in 1998. Wahid (2014: 39) divides Salafi groups in Indonesia into three: purist (quietist, a-political), *haraki* (activist), and jihadist. In this chapter, we are dealing with the purist. (On the history of Salafism in Indonesia, see, i.e., Hasan 2006 [chap. two], 2007, and Wahid 2014 [chap. two]).

Surakarta is an important site for the Salafi *dakwah* movement. Laskar Jihad, a paramilitary branch of FKAJWJ (Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah) was declared in Surakarta on 14 February 1998 (Fananie et al 2002: 33). During the conflicts that erupted in the Moluccas in January 1998, Surakarta played a significant role in support of the *jihad* mission launched by Laskar Jihad, the paramilitary wing of the FKAJWJ. Hundreds of jihad fighters were recruited in Surakarta (Hasan 2006: 162). Salafis in Surakarta, as well as in other cities, are divided into groups. As will become clear later, the existing Salafi radio stations reflect this division. To understand this relation, we should trace its roots back to the early conflicts among Salafis in Indonesia. These conflicts involved various issues, including leadership, *sururi* (followers of Muhammad Surur bin Nayef Zain al-'Abidin), funding organizations and others. Therefore, a brief summary of these conflicts is needed in order to get a clear picture of how they have especially affected the map of the Salafi radio stations in Surakarta. One of the easiest ways of doing this is by way of categorization as offered by previous writers. Noorhaidi Hasan, who wrote on the Laskar Jihad, divided Salafis into the Yemeni and *sururi* or *haraki* factions. The Yemeni faction consists of the followers of the greatest Yemeni Salafi scholar

Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i (d. 2001). The *sururi* faction includes those followers of Muhammad Surur bin Nayef Zain al-'Abidin. He is a former member of the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood who later became a Salafi. He was known for his criticism of the Saudi government and its ulama over the presence of the American troops in the country (Hasan 2006: 80-3).

Din Wahid has noted that Hasan's categorization is no longer valid. For that reason, he has made three different categories of Salafis in Indonesia, including purists, *haraki*, and jihadists. The purists are characterized by their total compliance to the State and their focus on *dakwah* activities. Under this category are there three subcategories, namely rejectionists, cooperationists, and *tanzimi* (having organizational orientation). Rejectionists are non-cooperative to other groups that they called *hizbi* (partisan) or *sururi*. They reject to follow the government curricula in their educational systems. Cooperationists take a more open stance towards other groups and they incorporate the government's curricula into their educational systems. The *tanzimi* propose the urgent need for the incorporation of a structured organization in order to be able to face the challenges Salafi *dakwah* faces, something that both rejectionists and cooperationists see as *bid'ah*. *Haraki* Salafis take a critical stance towards the State by not submitting totally to it. Total submission, for them, must only be given to God alone, and the State must implement God's law (*shari'ah*) totally. Jihadists, the last category, are somehow similar to the *haraki*. The only difference is that while the *haraki* resort to peaceful methods, the jihadists resort to violence against Muslim rulers they consider not implementing Islamic law (Wahid 2014: 39-43).

The categories have a useful but limited significance to understand the map of the Salafi radio stations. They imply that some issues generate conflicts and competition among Salafis and they are often dealt with and aired on Salafi radio stations. Of the

three categories Wahid provides, only two are applicable to the Salafi radio stations presently existing in Surakarta, including the purist and the *haraki*. As far as I know, there is no Salafi radio station that explicitly supports to the use of violence as the Jihadists do. Al-Madinah FM and Darussalaf FM stations represent two sub-factions of the purist, cooperationist and rejectionist. Under the *haraki* can be included RDS FM or HIZ RDS FM and Radio Isy Karima. In one way or or another, both are connected to Pesantren Al-Mukmin, Ngruki. Typical for these radio stations is their critical stance towards the State, something that is absent from purist Salafi radio stations. Nevertheless, it should be stressed at the outset that my main concern in this chapter is not the *haraki* faction, but rather the purist one. From this faction, three Salafi radio stations in Surakarta are under investigation, including Suara Quran FM, Darussalaf FM, and Al-Madinah FM. They represent of different sub-factions within the purist faction. From these radio stations, Darussalaf FM and Al-Madinah FM, can be identified as having sprung from ex-Laskar Jihad and the Yemeni network. The other, Suara Quran FM, is linked to non-ex-Laskar Jihad and non-Yemeni Salafis. These three radio stations can be entered into the current map of the Salafi movement. Before mapping the Salafi radio stations, the following brief account of the current development of Salafi movement may be of use.

The Salafi *dakwah* movement started to grow in the mid-1980s and intensified in line with the return of a vast number of LIPIA (Institute for the Study of Islam and Arabic) graduates from universities in the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia. LIPIA was initially established as LPBA (Institute of Arabic Education) in 1980, but transformed into the current LIPIA after 1986. It is a branch of the Islamic University of Imam Muhammad bin Saud in Riyadh.<sup>2</sup> Highly committed, they spread Wahhabism under the banner of the Salafi *dakwah*. Abu Nida was the first to initiate this Salafi *dakwah* by organizing *daurah* and *halaqah* for university

students in Yogyakarta. Like Abu Nida, his fellow Salafi activists also developed centers of *dakwah* in various places. The efflorescence of Salafi *dakwah* led to the emergence of Salafi foundations, like the As-Sunnah foundation, the As-Sofwa foundation, Lajnah Khairiyah Musytarokah, and others. Aside from these foundations, Salafi *pesantrens* were established everywhere and they are different from traditional ones attached to the NU, but resemble modernist ones run by modernist organizations like Al-Irsyad, Persis and the Muhammadiyah. Along with these developments, conflicts and tensions flared up between Salafi leaders who were competing among themselves about the issue of who represented the most legitimate and authoritative ‘true’ Salafis. Referring to the Laskar Jihad case, Noorhaidi Hasan demonstrated that the increasing influence among Salafis of Ja’far Umar Thalib challenged the leadership of other Salafi figures like Abu Nida. Thalib was also in conflict with his fellow leaders of Pesantren Al-Irsyad Tenganan in Salatiga. What is important to note in these conflicts is that Thalib used the *sururi* issue as a weapon to discredit all his rivals. The booming of Salafi *pesantrens* also resulted in conflicts. Din Wahid’s study on this subject, for instance, showed the conflicts between two Salafi *pesantrens*, Al-Furqon and Al-Bayyinah, in Gresik, East Java. Al-Furqon is led by Aunur Rofiq Ghuftron, a senior Salafi teacher who started his *dakwah* career in Yogyakarta together with Abu Nida. Founded in 1998, Al-Bayyinah is led by Agus Su’aidi and his brother, Muhammad Afifuddin as-Sidawi. In line with the conflict among Salafis, Afifuddin as-Sidawi criticized Ghuftron’s allies and other (non-Salafi) groups like the Muhammadiyah and personalities like Abu Bakar Ba’asyir. Muhammad Afifuddin as-Sidawi, who was a former student of Ja’far Umar Thalib, used the *hizbi-sururi* issue as a weapon to criticize Ghuftron. This conflict also impacted the relation between the students of both *pesantrens*. Unfortunately, Wahid does not clarify the reasons behind the conflict. Nevertheless, we can understand that the

conflict was fueled not only by their different interpretations of what ‘being true Salafi’ was, but also by the fact that Pesantren Al-Furqon was more prosperous than Pesantren Al-Bayyinah. As Wahid described, Pesantren Al-Furqon was (and is) physically more developed because of the richer economic resources it has and which it obtains through a Saudi donor.

There is no doubt that the *sururi* and *hizbi* issues played a significant role in the early development of Salafi *dakwah*. As Hasan put it, the *sururi* issue has two dimensions. First is competition over Salafi leadership, and the second is fundraising. It was Ja’far Umar Thalib who spread the *sururi* issue among Indonesian Salafis and by doing so he created the seeds of rivalry between himself and his opponents. The *sururi* issue also inflamed conflicts between Salafis and non-Salafi Muslim activists like those in the PKS (Islamic Party of Justice and Prosperity), HTI (Indonesian Hizbut Tahrir), and others. According to Hasan, the main objective of Thalib’s use of the *sururi* issue was to strengthen his relationships with prominent Salafi authorities in Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries. Simultaneously, by doing so, Thalib hoped to gain support from funding organizations in Saudi Arabia but he failed to fully realize this ambition (Hasan 2006: 80-3). After the disbandment of the Laskar Jihad, the *sururi* issue remained important in Salafi rivalries. The division between *sururi* and non-*sururi* was now applied not only to Thalib’s rivals. After the dissolution of the Laskar Jihad, Thalib was accused of deviating from the true Salafi method as demonstrated by his cooperation with non-Salafis in a public appearance in the Sufi-like gathering, Az-Zikra, led by Muhammad Ilham Arifin. Thus, his former colleagues in the Laskar Jihad accused Thalib himself of being *sururi*.

In this early phase, it was clear that those considered *sururi* and *hizbi* were outside FKAJ and Laskar Jihad. They were also beyond the Yemeni network that Ja’far Umar Thalib had established. While issues like *sururi* and *hizbi* had spread earlier,

the controversy over Ja'far Umar Thalib's leadership only started right at the end of 'the drama of Jihad in Moluccas' in 2002. This was when the Laskar Jihad was disbanded following the *fatwa* Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali had issued upon the request of a number of Thalib's colleagues who considered him as having deviated from the true Salafi method. Having obtained this *fatwa*, they declared the disbandment of the Laskar Jihad. Following this, Thalib's leadership declined considerably. Many of his colleagues and students abandoned him. This condition deteriorated even more when he tried to make allies with non-Salafis (Hasan 2006: 211-13). The issuance of the *fatwa* was preceded by a letter Dzulqarnain and Dzul Akmal had sent to al-Madkhali. As Hasan noted, they turned this into their weapon to mobilize support from other Laskar Jihad leaders to delegitimize Thalib. Then, Usamah Faisal Mahri and Luqman Baabduh were sent to meet al-Madkhali personally (Hasan 2006: 212). According to Hasan, the sending of these two was to confirm the letter previously sent by Dzulqarnain and Dzul Akmal. Subsequently, however, it became clear that this was an initial sign of the conflicts that have intensified in recent times. Thalib had tried to recuperate his relations with Middle Eastern Salafi authorities and his fellow Salafis in Indonesia by making a declaration of repentance. He had written the declaration in Medina on the sixth of Jumada al-'Ula 1431 (which corresponds to 19 April 2010<sup>3</sup>) while he performed the *'umrah* (little pilgrimage to Mecca). In response, his former colleagues and students took different stances towards him. Some of them persisted in opposing Thalib and they thought that Thalib was pretending to repent while in reality he continued too cooperate with *sururi* and *hizbi*. Some others accepted his repentance. They formed two opposing groups. One group, led by such former Laskar Jihad figures as Luqman Baabduh, Ayip Syafruddin, Muhammad As-Sewed, and Muhammad Afifuddin as-Sidawi, continued to think that Thalib had not abandoned his deviations and so they excluded

him from the 'real Salafis'. The other group, led by such figures as Dzulqarnain, Dzul Akmal, and Muhammad Naim, maintained that every Muslim, including Thalib, could make mistakes. From the Yemeni network, there is a group led by Abu Turab al-Jawi, a member of the Laskar Jihad. This group consists of al-Hajuri loyalists (Bulabo 2011: 38-44) who had replaced Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i in the Dar al-Hadith school, Dammaj. Some of them are still pursuing study at the school.<sup>4</sup>

Both Luqman Baabduh's and Dzulqarnain's factions continuously competed with each other and they tried to fortress their respective positions by gaining support from Middle Eastern ulama, especially from those in Yemen and Saudi Arabia. The support itself has been competed, and the effectiveness of it depended much on the extent to which each side was able to convince these ulama. Here we see that one ulama's *tahdhir* (warning or caution) directed at one particular Salafi teacher played a significant role in the competition. The term *tahdhir* refers to a warning given to those straying too far away from the right Salafi way. Other terms are also used for this like *jarh* (critique), *hajr* (abandonment), and *tabdi'* (making *bid'ah*). A Middle Eastern scholar to whom Salafis referred was Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali and not without reason. He is known to Salafis as the *hamil liwa' al-jarh wa-l ta'dil* (bearer of the banner of the science of the critical objections to the narrators of the prophetic tradition). He wrote a book entitled *Manhaj ahl al-sunnah fi naqd al-rijal wa-l kutub wa-l tawa'if* (Method of people of the Sunnah in criticism of personalities, books, and sects). Apart from that, he is well known for having sent many warnings towards other Salafi authorities, which, in a way, triggered debates among Salafi authorities as well as non-Salafi authorities. His pre-occupation with *tahdhir* was criticized by other Salafi scholars like Salih al-Fauzan, a member of Al-Lajnah al-Da'imah li-l Buhuth al-'Ilmiyah wa-l Ifta' (Permanent Council of Scientific Research and Fatwa).<sup>5</sup>

The term *tahdhir* has become a weapon to attack each other. A *tahdhir* is made based on information given to certain Salafi ulama. A *tahdhir* can be removed after new information related to a warned Salafi teacher is given. In this case, it is interesting that both Luqman Baabduh and Dzulqarnain ever got a *tahdhir* from Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali. Luqman Baabduh got a *tahdhir* from three great ulama (*ulama kibar*), including Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali, Muhammad bin Hadi al-Madkhali, and Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i. Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali labelled Baabduh by saying, 'I am afraid that this Luqman (Baabduh) is actually an *ikhwani* (one with the Brotherhood ideology) in Salafi garb'. Muhammad bin Hadi al-Madkhali suspected Baabduh of being *sururi*. Muqbil bin Hadi al-Madkhali, the highest Salafi authority within the Yemeni network, erased Baabduh's name from the list of his students. Like Baabduh, Dzulqarnain is also said to have received a *tahdhir* from Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali through a letter sent by Hani bin Buraik to Salafis in Indonesia. The letter was sent in relation to the planned visit of the Yemeni ulama to Indonesia. Seen from its context, the visit was supposed to be arranged by Dzulqarnain and his colleagues. However, the letter clarified that for some reason, Dzulqarnain was not considered the right person to accomplish this task. In the letter, Buraik informed about Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali who said, 'Tell shaikhs in Yemen not to attend his (Dzulqarnain's) invitation. This man loves to make fun, and imitates the Halabi (follower of al-Halabi) ways in making deceptions (*makar*).' Still according to the letter, Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali also called Dzulqarnain '*mutalawwin la'ab*' (fond of coloring and playing the game). Considering all this, Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali recommended Baabduh and his colleagues instead of Dzulqarnain to welcome the Yemeni ulama.<sup>6</sup> Based on the *tahdhir*, Dzulqarnain and Baabduh tried to undermine each other's authority. From the *tahdhir*, it is clear that each side tried to get the support of the higher Salafi authorities in the Middle East.



Like during Ja'far Umar Thalib's leadership, the *sururi* issue played a crucial role in the rivalry between Thalib's former colleagues and students. Baabduh and his colleagues tended to use the issue to criticize Dzulqarnain and his colleagues. This criticism was inseparable from the relatively open attitude that Dzulqarnain had adopted toward other Salafis and non-Salafis. This is not to say that the *sururi* issue is insignificant to Dzulqarnain and his colleagues. For him, a true Salafi should avoid any *sururi* attitude. The core idea of the *sururi* issue is the critical attitude towards the State and the belief that any State that does not implement the *shari'a* should be considered *kafir* (disbeliever), a so-called *takfir* (excommunication) idea. This can be seen, for instance, from Dzulqarnain's resignation from the Wahdah Islamiyah foundation in Makassar, South Sulawesi.<sup>7</sup> In the eyes of some Salafis, the Wahdah Islamiyah had adopted the Muslim Brotherhood method.

However, besides the *sururi* and *hizbi* issues, an important thing had changed within the Yemeni network. After the death of Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i in 2001, the leadership of his Dar al-Hadith school in Dammaj was handed down to one of his students, Yahya bin Ali al-Hajuri.<sup>8</sup> The authority of al-Hajuri was apparently challenged by other Salafi scholars both in Yemen and in Saudi Arabia. Muhammad bin Abd al-Wahhab al-Wusabi, for instance, labelled al-Hajuri a *mubtadi* (maker of *bid'ah*, bad innovation). Al-Hajuri was in conflict with his fellow Yemen Salafi scholar, Abd Allah Mar'i al-Adeni. In Saudi Arabia, Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali warned Salafis about the danger of al-Hajuri's *fitnah* (libel). According to al-Madkhali, al-Hajuri is like a plant that was planted among the Salafis to destroy the Salafi *dakwah*. Other Saudi Salafi scholars like Salih al-Fauzan also criticized al-Hajuri. This rivalry had influenced the Yemeni network in Indonesia. Luqman Baabduh and his allies also used the term *halabi* as a weapon to delegitimize their rivals. In his *daurah* in Balikpapan,<sup>9</sup> he labelled Asnur, a Salafi teacher from Kendari in Sulawesi, a *hajuri* or *hajawuri*

(follower of al-Hajuri). Luqman Baabduh himself got *tahdhir* from al-Hajuri.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, it is understandable that Luqman Baaduh would be very critical towards the Dar al-Hadith school Dammaj under the leadership of al-Hajuri. Some Indonesian Salafi students of the younger generation still in this school opposed the moves mobilized by Luqman Baabduh.<sup>11</sup> Abu Fairuz Abdurrohman bin Sukaya al-Qudsi, a student of the Dar al-Hadith school, wrote a book entitled *Bangkitnya Kesadaran Penuh dengan Terbongkarnya Hizbiyyah Luqman Baabduh* (The Rising of Full Awareness of the Dismantled Hizbi Orientation of Luqman Baabduh).<sup>12</sup> Al-Qudsi also wrote two other books in defense of al-Hajuri against Abd Allah Mar'i al-Adeni and his followers.<sup>13</sup> Luqman Baabduh also used the term *al-halabi* to discredit his rivals. The term refers to Ali Hasan al-Halabi, a Salafi leader from Jordan, a student of Nasir al-Din al-Albani (d. 1999). Al-Lajnah al-Da'imah li-l Buhuth al-'Ilmiyah wa-l Ifta' (Permanent Council of Scientific Research and Fatwa) in Saudi Arabia issued a *fatwa* against al-Halabi's books it considered as teaching the Murji'ah ideology. Based on this ideology, action is not one of the valid requirements of the Islamic faith.<sup>14</sup> Al-Halabi supported Rodja Radio. He once even showed up on Rodja TV, a national television station, in an interview about radicalism in Islam.<sup>15</sup> As noted above, Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali labelled Dzulqarnain as follower of the Halabi way.

### 3 Salafi radio stations in Surakarta

Based on the brief description of the current development of the Salafi movement above, in terms of their management, Salafi radio stations can be classified into three different types. The first one includes those Salafi radio stations Salafi activists manage outside the circle of former Laskar Jihad members and of the Yemeni network. The representative of this type is Rodja Radio based in Bogor, West Java. The other two types that emerged from the conflict between former Laskar Jihad members who

established their own radio stations. On the one hand, there are Salafi radio stations established by those affiliated to the Baabduh network. There are Salafi radio stations managed by those linked to the Dzulqarnain network. In Surakarta, these types of Salafi radio are represented by Suara Quran FM, Darussalaf FM, and Al-Madinah FM respectively.

Networking is an important part of the Salafi movement. Not only does it relate to the Salafis ideological interconnectedness, it also has to do with how they interact with one another in various aspects. With regard to *dakwah* radio in particular and the media in general, this networking played a significant role not only in sharing information among themselves, but also in mobilizing Salafi *dakwah* activities. It is through their network that Salafi teachers can easily build their careers as religious personalities widely known to their fellow Salafis throughout the country. They are often invited to deliver sermons and talks in events like *daurah* (workshop) and *kajian ilmiah* (Islamic discussion). These sermons and talks have become one of Salafi radio's most important broadcasting materials. No less important, this also has to do with media business network, which here is not confined to electronic media only but also includes print media (books, magazines, and the like). Referring to the aforementioned Salafi divisions, we distinguish three different networks, the Rodja Radio network, the Dzulqarnain network, and the Luqman Baabduh network.

### 3.1 Suara Quran FM

Suara Quran FM (which has turned into SQ Abror FM) belongs to Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah in Sukoharjo. Its director (*mudir*) is Aris Sugiantoro, a former student of Muhammad bin Salih al-'Uthaimin (d. 2001). The Ma'had's foundation was funded by the Saudi charitable foundation Idarat al-Masajid wa-l Mashari' al-Khairiya in al-'Uthaimin's hometown, Unaizah.<sup>16</sup> Thus, the Ma'had's buildings and other facilities are luxurious enough, complete with

basketball and volleyball fields. The Ma'had follows the national educational system, and runs education from elementary to senior high school levels. Suara Quran FM was established in 2008. It started to broadcast on 17 February 2008. It was first based in the house of a certain Pak Eko Pramono alias Abu Ibrahim, and in May 2008 it moved to the Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah complex. In May 2013, it ended its operations for a while because of license issues until it transformed into SQ Abror FM. Under this new name, it is allowed to broadcast only in the Karanganyar district.<sup>17</sup> However, the studio is still based in the old office in the Ma'had complex. In order to deal with the issue of the zone barrier, the Internet online radio, which had already existed before, is used. In the time of writing this section, the website page of the radio, [www.suaraquran.com](http://www.suaraquran.com), was no longer online, but the online streaming was still active. It is from this online streaming radio that the religious programs of Suara Quran FM at this moment can be heard in the Karanganyar region. Suara Quran FM is part of the Ma'had's *dakwah* division. Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah and Suara Quran FM are connected with *pesantrons* and radio stations run by non-Laskar Jihad Salafis. Rodja Radio is one of the most important Salafi radio stations from which Suara Quran FM imported recordings of sermon.

Besides a radio station, Suara Quran FM, Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah also has a local branch of Insan TV. The central Insan TV is under the management of the Insan Media Dakwah Foundation, a Jakarta-based non-profit foundation.<sup>18</sup> The foundation itself is part of a larger institution called *Komunitas Pengusaha Muslim Indonesia* (KPMI, Community of Indonesian Muslim Entrepreneurs). It is interesting that this community arose out of a mailing list community named Milis Pengusaha Muslim<sup>19</sup> from which a foundation, Yayasan Bina Pengusaha Muslim Indonesia (Foundation of Indonesian Muslim Entrepreneurs' Management) was also forged. These two institutions emerged from a number of Muslim entrepreneurs' deep concern with Muslims' poor

economic condition compared to that of non-Muslims. There are three objectives of the establishment of KPMI: 1) to be true in practicing religion, in order for the doors of God's sustenance and success in the hereafter to open; 2) to be true in working, in order (for Muslims) to manage their enterprises well, for improving the outcome of the work; and 3) to be true in their social lives, in order not to violate the *shari'a* in running business.<sup>20</sup> KPMI operates in 26 coordinating areas (*Korwil*), one of them in Cairo, Egypt.<sup>21</sup> Surakarta is one of those areas. Under the KPMI are other *dakwah* media such as Rodja Radio, Rodja TV, and Yufid TV. Sermon recordings of the teachers who belong to this network are played regularly on Suara Quran FM. We cannot establish a direct connection between Suara Quran FM and this business network in terms of its economic benefit. What is clear, however, is that broadcasting materials aired on Suara Quran FM are often taken from this network. One of the most respected teachers at Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah, Kholid Syamhudi, regularly gives sermons on Yufid TV and Rodja TV, which are under the management of KPMI. Recordings of sermons delivered by Salafi teachers attached to Rodja were often broadcast on Suara Quran FM. *Fatawa Mukhtarah* (Selected *fatwas*) programs of Suara Quran FM were imported from Rodja Radio. All these suffice to prove that Suara Quran FM much benefitted from the Rodja network.

### 3.2 Al-Madinah FM

Al-Madinah FM is affiliated with Ma'had Al-Madinah in Surakarta. Both Ma'had Al-Madinah's *dakwah* and communication division or its director were unable to provide the exact date of Al-Madinah FM's establishment. This indicates how poor the documentation of this radio station is. From my own experience of listening to *dakwah* radio, Al-Madinah FM has existed before 2010 (much later than Suara Quran FM). It is instrumental to the

*dakwah* endeavors of Ma'had Al-Madinah. It serves under the *dakwah* division of the foundation, established on 30 September 1996. Al-Madinah FM and Ma'had Al-Madinah are led by former members of Laskar Jihad and former students of Ja'far Umar Thalib. Jauhari, one of the key teachers at Al-Madinah, was a member of the former advisory board of the Laskar Jihad, and Muhammad Naim is a former member of the Laskar Jihad. Abu Ahmad Rahmat, the director of Ma'had Al-Madinah is Ja'far Umar Thalib's former student and he studied with Thalib for three and half years in Pesantren Ihyaussunnah in Dogelan, Yogyakarta. Ma'had Al-Madinah is concerned with education and *dakwah*. It runs formal and informal education, including *ma'had (pesantren)*, schools, and *majlis taklim*. Al-Madinah FM is well-managed as can be seen from its regular broadcast programs. This is regardless of the fact that it is facing the broadcasting permit issue. As Abu Ahmad Rahmat said, an on-going effort has been being made to follow the procedures in order to gain the government's legal recognition. This is in response to the sweeping operation by Balai Monitoring (Monitoring Bureau) under the Ministry of Communication and Information in charge of monitoring radio and television airwaves.

Al-Madinah FM's network reflects that of Ma'had Al-Madinah. Salafi teachers actively involved in the foundation not only come from Ma'had Al-Madinah, but also from Ma'had An-Najiyah in Boyolali which was established on land owned by Ja'far Umar Thalib.<sup>22</sup> This means that both Al-Madinah and Ma'had An-Najiyah have a special connection with Thalib. A number of teachers at Ma'had An-Najiyah offer regular sermons to Al-Madinah FM. Abu Ibrahim Abdul Malik, a teacher in Ma'had An-Najiyah and Ma'had Al-Madinah, wrote a pamphlet entitled *Agama Itu Adalah Nasehat* (Religion is Advice) to defend Ma'had Al-Madinah from criticism launched against it by Salafi purist-rejectionists from Ma'had Darussalaf and its network.<sup>23</sup> When in 2013 I visited Ma'had Al-

Madinah in Surakarta, one staff member recommended me to listen to the online radio called An-Nash ([www.annashradio.com](http://www.annashradio.com)) that belonged to Dzulqarnain, who is also the owner of [www.dzulqarnain.net](http://www.dzulqarnain.net). Dzulqarnain is one of the important Salafi teachers whose sermons are aired on Al-Madinah FM. Besides, he teaches at Ma'had Al-Madinah. Dzulqarnain is a leading Salafi figure and a former student of Ja'far Umar Thalib. He was the head of the *fatwa* board of the Laskar Jihad. After Laskar Jihad's dissolution, he was among those critical of Thalib. In a published article, he criticized Thalib who supported the WTC bombing.<sup>24</sup> Through <http://jihadbukankenistaan.com>, he corrected misunderstandings in the concept of Jihad in Islam. He is a prolific writer as confirmed by the dozens of articles and books he wrote. He is also very active in engaging in *dakwah* through the Internet (website: [www.dzulqarnain.net](http://www.dzulqarnain.net)) and on other media. Many of his sermons have been stored on CDs organized by various *tasjilat* (audio-recording enterprises), including Tasjilat As-Sunnah Makassar, Tasjilat Al-Atsariyyah Samarinda, and Tasjilat Al-Madinah Surakarta. From this, it is clear that Al-Madinah has become one of the important purveyors of Dzulqarnain's sermon recordings. These *tasjilat* are sold commercially and Al-Madinah FM takes much benefit from them for its sermon programs.<sup>25</sup> Other Salafi radio stations that benefits from Dzulqarnain's network are Radio An-Nashihah (online radio, [www.annashihah.com](http://www.annashihah.com), Makassar) Radio Syiar Tauhid (online radio, [www.syiartauhid.info](http://www.syiartauhid.info)), Radio Adh-Dhiya' FM Cirebon, and Radio Al-Barokah Semarang (online radio).

It is interesting to look at the attempts Ma'had Al-Madinah made to gain the support of the high Salafi authorities in the Middle East. One of these attempts was by inviting them to come to Ma'had Al-Madinah. In June 2013, two ulama from Yemen, Abdullah al-Mar'i al-Adeni and Uthman al-Salimi, were invited to deliver lectures in the *Daurah Ulama Yaman* program, broadcast live on Al-Madinah FM. In June 2014, Sayyaf al-Radda'i was

invited to attend the *Tabligh Akbar Bersama Ulama Timur Tengah* (Great Sermon with the Middle Eastern Ulama). Al-Radda'i is the director of Dar al-Hadith in Dhammar in Yemen. Their coming can be considered as strengthening Ma'had Al-Madinah's legitimacy vis-à-vis its rivals. Before that, Ma'had Al-Madinah failed to invite them. One of the reasons was, as mentioned above, Rabi' bin Hadi al-Madkhali's warning (*tahdhir*) that discouraged Yemen ulama to come to Indonesia upon the invitation of Dzulqarnain and his allies. Luqman Baabduh and his allies used this *tahdhir* to delegitimize Dzulqarnain and his allies.

### 3.3 Darussalaf FM

Darussalaf FM belongs to Ma'had Darussalaf (also called Ma'had Ibnu Taimiyah) in Sukoharjo. There is no information about its establishment. According to my personal notes, it already existed before 2010. Its studio station was located to the right of the Ibnu Taimiyah mosque, Jl. Ciptonegaran, Sanggrahan, Grogol, Cemani, Sukoharjo, and it moved, together with the mosque, in 2013 to Jl. Pandawa, Karang 4/7 Sanggrahan, Sukoharjo. Ma'had Darussalaf was established on a piece of land voluntarily endowed by a local rich man who was sympathetic to the Salafis. It is said that the land was endowed to Ja'far Umar Thalib who subsequently entrusted it to a number of his colleagues who then founded Ma'had Darussalaf. Among them are Ayip Syafruddin, Thalib's colleagues at FKAWJ and the Laskar Jihad and Muhammad Idral Harits, a former student of Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i from Yemen. Conflicts over Thalib's leadership, which occurred among Salafis after Laskar Jihad's liquidation, led to the owner's withdrawal of the land endowment.

Darussalaf FM has become one of Ma'had Darussalaf's important media in running its Salafi *dakwah*. No doubt, when its members are involved in a debate over a certain issue it is its primary mouthpiece. In an indirect way, Darussalaf FM's relation



with Ma'had Al-Madinah are tense. This can be seen from some of its broadcasting materials. For instance, Darussalaf FM once aired a recorded sermon by Luqman Baabduh from Jember, East Java, who criticized Ma'had Al-Madinah because, according to him, it entertains friendly relations with *hizbi*. Abu Nashim Mukhtar, one of Ma'had Darussalaf's important leaders and preacher on Darussalaf FM, also condemned Ma'had Al-Madinah, among other reasons, because it follows the national government-regulated educational system.

Darussalaf FM's network (through Ma'had Darussalaf) consists of Indonesian former students of Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i (d. 2001) from Yemen and of Ja'far Umar Thalib's former students and colleagues. In other words, it is within the Yemeni network and, more specifically, inside the *Ihyaus Sunnah* network. They are, to borrow Wahid's categorization, purist-rejectionist Salafis. Moreover, as discussed earlier, conflicts occurred among Thalib's students and colleagues over Thalib's leadership after Laskar Jihad's liquidation. Seen from this, Darussalaf FM preachers included some who were very critical of Thalib. The structure of Ma'had Darussalaf include Muhammad Idral Harits, Ayip Syafruddin, Abu Nashim Mukhtar, Abu Almass Al-Ausathi and Abu Sholih Fauzan al-Maidani. Among the important Salafi teachers outside the structure of Ma'had Darussalaf whose sermons are often broadcast on Darussalaf FM are Luqman Baabduh from Jember and Muhammad Afifuddin As-Sidawi from Gresik, both in East Java. Following the dissolution of the Laskar Jihad, he adopted an oppositional stance towards Thalib. His sermons criticizing Thalib were frequently aired by Darussalaf FM. Muhammad Afifuddin As-Sidawi is a former student of Thalib and was involved in *jihad* struggles in Ambon in 2000.<sup>26</sup> Seen from this, Darussalaf FM can be included among the Luqman Baabduh network.

It is interesting that all radio stations within this network have connections with 'Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia' (<http://miratsul->

anbiya.net/), a Salafi website formerly named Dammaj Al-Habibah (<http://dammajhabibah.net>). The name Dammaj Al-Habibah (the beloved Dammaj) refers to Dammaj, a small village in Yemen where Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i opened his *markiz* (study center). There are a number of Salafi figures behind the website 'Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia' and they are Qomar Su'aidi, Usamah Mahri, Ayip Syafruddin, Askari bin Jamal, Luqman Baabduh, Muhammad Sarbini, Muhammad Afifuddin As-Sidawi, and Ruwaifi bin Sulaimi. All of them belong to the Luqman Baabduh network. Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia's website states that the name change was not intended to change the essential substance of Dammaj Al-Habibah. However, it is clear that the new name is linked to 'Miraath al-Anbiya' ([miraath.net](http://miraath.net)), a Salafi website based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. As part of Miraath Publications,<sup>27</sup> this website is a radio online which contains audio recordings of live Islamic sermons and lectures by main Salafi ulama like Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali, Muhammad bin Hadi al-Madkhali, Ubaid Abdullah al-Jabiri, Hani bin Buraik, Zaid bin Hadi al-Madkhali, Abdullah al-Bukhari, Khalid al-Zafiri, Muhammad Bazmul, Muhammad al-Anjari, and Khalid Abd al-Rahman.<sup>28</sup> Most of them are in Saudi Arabia. Seen from this, it can be said that the change of the name has to do with their attempts to broaden the network's scope. Unlike 'Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia', 'Miraath Anbiya' does not have a Dammaj Al-Habibah link. This points to the changing orientation of Yemeni graduates from the Luqman Baabduh network from Yemen to Saudi Arabia. No doubt, this change is linked with the changing patronage. After Muqbil bin Hadi al-Wadi'i's death, Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali became the main patron of Luqmaan Baabduh and his allies. In their competition with the Dzulqarnain network, these attempts clearly help them to gain support from ulama in Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries in the Middle East. Some of them, like Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali, Hani bin Buraik and Abdullah al-Bukhari, for instance, played an important role in the issuance of the *tahdhir*

to Dzulqarnain. A number of Salafi radio stations can be traced as originating from the Baabduh network and from Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia including Darussalaf FM (Surakarta), Radio Bismillah (online radio, Surabaya), Ibnul Qoyyim (online radio, Balikpapan), Radio Al-Manshuroh FM (and online) in Cilacap, Radio Rosyid (online radio), Radio Salafi ([www.salafy.or.id](http://www.salafy.or.id)) (online radio, Cileungsi, Sorowaka, Makassar, and Magelang). It is from these radio stations that we can find the broadcasting of the sermons by Salafi preachers gathered within the Baabduh network.

The difference between Ma'had Darussalaf and Ma'had Al-Madinah is not only their stance towards Thalib. As mentioned above, both differ in their educational system. The former implements the Salafi *pesantren* system and does not use the national curriculum. The latter follows the national education system and curriculum. Ma'had Darussalaf is exclusive, since it rejects cooperation with those Salafis and non-Salafis whom it considers *sururi*, *hizbi*, *khawarij*, and the like and it is very resistant to outside influences. For example, in 2010, Cisform organized a workshop for pesantrens teachers and directors in Surakarta, in which I was involved as an organizing member. Ma'had Darussalaf was invited to participate. It sent a delegate to this workshop. After the workshop, Cisform donated books to the pesantrens who had participated. A week later, Ma'had Darussalaf returned the books to Cisform on the ground that they were unsuitable for the Ma'had's students. This refutation was clearly because the books were not in line with the Salaf way of thinking. Conversely, Ma'had Al-Madinah is relatively open to others. The adoption of the national curriculum is a clear example of this. In *daurah*, it often cooperated with and invited other institutions. Recently, on 8 June 2014, it organized a *daurah* featuring some ulama from Yemen. It was attended by local Muslims and the local head of Sukoharjo was invited to offer a welcoming speech (*sambutan*). These are just a few examples of how open Ma'had Al-Madinah is to others.

Noorhaidi Hasan's observation he made in 2003 that in general Salafi pesantrens that belong to the *Ihyaus Sunnah* or Yemeni network were physically poor remains, I think, valid but some change happened. In his observation, Ma'had Al-Madinah's facilities were poor (Hasan 2006: 87). However, at present things have been improving. It has opened schools, from kindergarten to senior high school levels. Its openness to the national State curriculum seems to have played a significant role in this improvement. This is different from Ma'had Darussalaf, which is still in a poor condition. Darussalaf FM is not well managed. In 2013, it had to move to another location, since the owner had taken over Ma'had Darussalaf's building. Recently, Al-Madinah is facing a *tahdhir* from Luqman Baabduh and colleagues of his network. A recorded sermon through which Baabduh criticized Ma'had Al-Madinah was aired on Darussalaf FM several times. In the sermon, a member of the audience asked Baabduh about the Islamic ruling on sending children to Ma'had Al-Madinah. In replay, Baabduh suggested him to take his child out of Ma'had Al-Madinah in order to save him from the dangers of the *sururi* and the *hizbi*.

#### 4 'True' Salafi radio contested

This section is primarily concerned with the interpretation of Islam over which Salafis have contested in order to hold a most representative position within the Salafi movement. To understand this contestation, I will start with the guiding question: Is there any 'true' Salafi radio? It is interesting to start this section by providing a brief comment made by Abu Ahmad Rahmat, the director of Ma'had Al-Madinah.<sup>29</sup> When I asked him about the position of his radio station within the many existing *dakwah* radio stations, he commented that there are various types of *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta, including *Sufi*, *khawarij*, and *mu'tazili* or *'aqlani* (rationalist). For those who understand the current Islamic movements and discourses in Surakarta, it becomes

clear to which groups and radio stations these terms refer. He called radio stations like Al-Hidayah FM, Pitutur Luhur FM, and Assunnah FM, which play *shalawat* songs and the like, Sufi radios while he called RDS FM a *Khawarij* radio. This is inseparable from their criticism launched against Abu Bakar Baasyir and people like him for having a *Khawarij* religious orientation and method of thinking. One of the indications is that they easily call their opponents *kafirs*. Abu Ahmad Rahmat and other Salafis call MTA FM a radio station with an '*aqlani*' (rationalist) or *Mu'tazili* orientation. This is because, in the eyes of Salafis in Surakarta, the MTA relies much more on human reason than on the Qur'an and the Sunnah like the *Mu'tazilah*. This comment is a clear example of how *dakwah* radio stations are identified. It draws boundaries based on religious identities and ideologies. How then does a radio station identify itself as a Salafi radio station?

To answer this question, first of all, I will depict the common features of Salafi radio stations. Since the Salafi radio stations under investigation are attached to different Salafi factions, a further discussion needs to be focused on an examination of how these differences impacted their contestation over what the meaning is of being a 'true' Salafi radio. This can be undertaken by paying particular attention to a range of Islamic issues on which they differ in interpretation. As will become clear later, these issues are closely tied especially with their networks and means of funding.

The general features of a Salafi radio can be recognized from, among others, its slogans that contain such special words as *salaf* and *sunnah*. The three Salafi radio stations under discussion here have their respective special slogans. Suara Quran FM is known for its slogan '*Media Kalam Ilahi*' (Medium for God's Words). As can be seen, it refers to the common notion of the Qur'an as *kalam Allah* (verbal Words of Allah) rather than to a specific term related to Salafis. This is different from the slogans of the other two Salafi

radio stations, which explicitly show a Salafi character. Darussalaf FM has a slogan '*Istiqamah memperjuangkan Sunnah di atas manhaj salaful ummah*' (Consistent in Struggling for the Sunnah based on the Method of the *Salaf*). The slogan of Al-Madinah FM says: '*Menebar Dakwah Di Atas Sunnah*' (Spreading Dakwah Based on the Sunnah). As can be seen, both use the word 'Sunnah'. The stronger identification with the Sunnah was always emphasized by the Salafi radio activists I interviewed by adding such a phrase like '*menurut pemahaman salaf*' (in accordance with the understanding of the *Salaf*). Thus, the next feature is that all programs played on a Salafi radio are assumed to present Islam as understood by the *salaf*. To keep them in line with the Salaf method, a special team is created in charge of monitoring the programs being made. The third feature is the absence of commercial breaks and advertisements. This is in line with their claim that Salafi radio is purely for *dakwah* purposes. With these purposes in mind they make non-commercial breaks called public service announcement (*iklan layanan masyarakat*). Rodja Radio (and Rodja TV), for instance, has several segments of non-commercial breaks, containing short pieces on Islamic themes like 'Ahmadiyah is not Islam', 'What is *bid'ah*,' and 'Suicide bombing is not jihad'.<sup>30</sup>

Next, no Salafi radio station plays music of any kind, be it religious or not. This is in line with the Salafi understanding of the Islamic ruling on music. I have discussed this elsewhere. Suffice to say that this excludes the Quranic recitation in rhythm (*qira'at*). What has to be noted in this regard is how the concept of entertainment (*hiburan* in Indonesian language) is formulated. The three stations discussed here offered no explanation about this concept, but in practice they followed a specific concept they considered in line with Islam. A Salafi radio in Cirebon, called Assunnah FM (which has changed into KITA FM)<sup>31</sup> gave me the following interesting concept of what it sees as an entertainment program. It is called *program hiburan Qur'ani* (Quranic-based

entertainment program) and is: 'A program which entertains and calms the heart of listeners with various forms of *murattal al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic recitation) and *hadith* and prayers ...'<sup>32</sup> Explicit in this conceptualization is that entertainment in itself is not forbidden but that the content or material offers as entertainment matters, which is in this context the Qur'an, *hadith* and prayers. In other words, as long as the entertainment is in accordance with Islam (as understood by the Salaf), it is allowed. In some respects, this is similar to the principle that other non-Salafi radio stations hold but it is different from others because of the different interpretations Salafis ascribe to the meaning of entertainment.

The presence of a *daurah* program on all Salafi radios is the last characteristic. This is a very important program. *Daurah* is a sort of workshop organized at a certain time and in a certain place. In a *daurah*, a prominent Salafi teacher is invited to chair the workshop to help participants deepen their knowledge and understanding of a specific theme. It seems to me that it is part of Salafi indoctrination. It is not infrequent that Middle Eastern Salafi scholars are invited to deliver lectures (*muhadarah*). The lectures given in a *daurah* are recorded and circulated on CDs. These *daurah* are frequently aired live on radio, including streaming radio channels. Aired on the radio and the Internet, and thus reach wider audiences beyond their initial publics.

The general features given above provide us only with an idea of the marks of identity of 'being a true Salafi radio' Salafi radio stations share, which are actually instable. The *sururi* and related issues like *hizbi* have become a sort of shorthand to label those Salafi radio stations considered of having deviated from the true Salafi path. The case of Rodja Radio is a clear example. It has been accused of being a '*sururi*' or '*hizbi*' mouthpiece because the people involved in it are considered *sururi*. The accusation also relates to the funding issue. Rodja Radio is seen as receiving donations of the Ihya' al-Turath foundation. The issue was reported to the Salafi

authorities in the Middle East. Some of them like Rabi bin Hadi al-Madkhali and Ubaid bin Abdullah al-Jabiri issued *fatwas* regarding the unlawfulness of listening to Rodja Radio (and watching Rodja TV). In defense, Rodja Radio members asked for a *fatwa* from Abd al-Razzaq al-Badr, a professor at the Islamic University of Medina and teacher at Masjid Nabawi, also in Medina.

To further grasp this, it is important to note first that Salafis prefer radio over television. Some Salafis' use of television in their *dakwah* activities fueled a heated debate over the Islamic ruling on television. In practice, Salafi ulama disagree on this matter. This is reflected in the answer Askari bin Jamal, a Salafi teacher, gave to the following questions: 'What is the Islamic ruling on the depiction of living creatures on TV? Is it true that Salafi ulama disagree on this matter? This is because Firanda, a student of a Salafi ulama showed up several times on Rodja TV. Please give me an explanation!' In replay, Askari underlined that the problem is not the TV set, but what is being presented on TV, which is pictures or images. This is different from radio, which only presents sound. There is no disagreement among ulama on the permissibility of using radio, since it is only sound or noise. By contrast, television raises questions pertaining to moving pictures of living creatures like humans and animals. One prophetic *hadith* says that the ones who will get God's great punishment in the hereafter are painters (*musawwirun*). Another *hadith* says that the (essence of) an image (of living creatures) is the part of the head. If there is no head, there is no image.<sup>33</sup> Based on these hadiths, some ulama hold that the depiction of living beings is forbidden. Others hold that it is permissible if the picture of a living being is urgently needed. As examples Askari mentioned ID cards, passports, and the like. Considering this disagreement, Askari asserted that the presentations of such pictures is a matter of disputation (*ikhtilaf ijtihadi*). He then clarified further that the problem with *dakwah* television is its content. He said the following:



‘But what becomes the objection for the ulama are the programs, what is presented, especially if it bears the name of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama’ah*, as presented by Rodja, which stands for Radio Dakwah Ahlussunnah wal Jama’ah, using the name of *Ahl al-Sunnah*. If (Rodja) truly contains or presents programs of which the aim is to spread the prophetic *sunnah* of the sunnah ulama, of the preachers famous for spreading the prophetic sunnah, far from *shubhat*, far from the warnings of the ulama, it is welcome (*ahlan wa sahlan*)... this is regardless of the fact that I myself, or maybe also others, more carefully follow the opinion not to present the face (of humans) by recording or making videos and the like... But what is problematic (of Rodja TV) is the presentation of some figures considered as Shaikhs or leaders of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama’ah*, while the ulama have given them a warning. This is the problem. Some (of them) fell into deviation, into the diseases of *hizbiyah*, of *bid’ah*.<sup>34</sup>

The lengthy quotation above demonstrates what the problems are for a Salafi teacher like Askari. It is not what is presented on TV as he problematized at the beginning. Inconsistently, he disregards different opinions of the ulama on this matter which shows that the real problem for him is related to the preachers who appeared on Rodja TV. This is also the case of Rodja Radio. Another Salafi teacher, Dzulqarnain, was asked a question pertaining to the Islamic ruling on listening to Rodja Radio. The question reads as follows: ‘Is it permissible for us to listen to Radio (Rodja) or watch Rodja TV, which is similar to or the same as (Radio or TV of) the *Ahl al-Sunnah*?’ In response, he said, ‘I don’t recommend to listen to (Rodja Radio) or watch Rodja TV, because there are persons on this radio (of whom) some of their *manhaj* is not correct, and some others not clear and thanks to God there are many facilities to study religion (other than Rodja TV/Rodja Radio).’<sup>35</sup>

A further discussion on Rodja TV and Rodja Radio is beyond the scope of this chapter. What I want to note here is that there is a debate among Salafis over the meaning of being a ‘true Salafi radio’.

This meaning is contested since there is no clear-cut boundary between true and not-true Salafi radio stations. This contestation is replete with the interests of each group. In Surakarta, this contestation exists but it is not always easily identifiable since members of the existing Salafi radio stations in Surakarta, to the best of my knowledge, never explicitly mentioned the name of the specific radio station they criticized.

In 2005, both Dzulkarnain's and Baabduh's groups agreed to reconcile (*islah*). Their agreement was written in Arabic, dated 26 Jumada al-Ula 1426 or 2 July 2005. Some points of the agreement are specifically related to Al-Madinah Surakarta.<sup>36</sup> This agreement could not prevent both sides from entering into conflicts. This can vividly be seen from various religious gatherings, blogs, Facebook discussions, and radio programs. Here I want to present some religious lectures organized by both sides as examples. In a *daurah* held in Balikpapan in Kalimantan, Luqman Baabduh was asked if it was allowed to send children to study at Al-Madinah Surakarta. His answer was 'no'. He did not explicitly give his reason. The recording of Baabduh's lecture was aired by the Salafi radios that belong to his network, one of which was Darussalaf FM.<sup>37</sup> In his *daurah* lecture broadcast on Darussalaf FM, Muhammad Afifuddin As-Sidawi was asked about the legal ruling (*hukm*) of studying with a teacher who teaches '*ilm al-kalam* (Islamic theology). In reply, he said that this was forbidden.<sup>38</sup> Abu Nashim Mukhtar, one of Ma'had Darussalaf's important teachers, vehemently criticized Ma'had Al-Madinah in a lecture he delivered on 27 September 2014 in Banyumas, Central Java. In his lecture entitled 'Romantika Muda-Mudi dalam Thalabul Ilmi' (Various Challenges Facing Youths in their Pursuit of knowledge),<sup>39</sup> Mukhtar offered various proof that Ma'had Al-Madinah deviated from the true Salafi *manhaj*.

So far I have never heard Ma'had Al-Madinah's response broadcast on Al-Madinah FM. When I visited Ma'had Al-Madinah, one teacher explained that the conflicts between Salafis should not

become matters for public consumption. That is why Al-Madinah FM did not air a special sermon to counteract the critiques launched against it. This was also the answer given by the head of Ma'had Al-Madinah's communication and *dakwah* division and by the Ma'had's director. However, this does not mean that there was no reaction. Some years ago, on 15-16 July 2009, a *daurah* held in Masjid Jajar in Surakarta in which Ma'had Al-Madinah organized most of its religious lectures, featured Dzulqarnain. The theme of the *daurah* was *zakat* (Islamic obligatory tithe), and it was aired by Al-Madinah FM. On the first day, Jauhari, one of the main leaders of Ma'had Al-Madinah, was given a special session to deliver religious advice to the participants of the *daurah*. He used the session to speak about the critiques against the formal education at Ma'had Al-Madinah, an issue heatedly debated among Salafis in Surakarta in particular and in other cities as well. To explore the issue, he started by reading a short treatise entitled *Al-Farq bain al-nasihah wa-l ta'yir* (The difference between advice and blaming) (1988) written by Ibn Rajab al-Hanbali (d. 1393). As its title suggests, the text deals with the way to advice Muslims based on Islamic teaching. During his reading, he tried to connect it to a discussion of the critical issues pertaining to Ma'had Al-Madinah. He avoided mentioning the names of those who criticized the formal education Ma'had Al-Madinah offers. However, it is clear from his talk that he was pointing out to, among other things, the critical sermons broadcast on Darussalaf FM. This became even clearer in his further explanation of the *Al-Farq* book mentioned above. In *Al-Farq*, Ibn Rajab refers to the explanation of al-Fudail (bin 'Ayyad) on the signs of *nasihah* (advice) and *ta'yir* (blaming). According to al-Fudail, an advice is accompanied by *sitr* (covering the shames of others), while *ta'yir* is accompanied by *i'lan* (uncovering or publicizing the shames of others) (al-Hanbali 1988: 17). Contextualizing this explanation, Jauhari reminded his audience of the agreement of the 2005 reconciliation which was

broken and warned conflicting Salafis not to spread or publicize past conflicted matters through media like magazines, radio and the Internet. The agreement also urged them to stop making *tahdhir* against their fellow Salafis. Jauhari commented further as follows:

Every time a problem occurs, it is publicized through the radio. As a consequence, common people ... Maybe they heard *announcements in Sundanese language, for instance, and in Javanese, and perhaps in Indonesian...* (Italics mine).<sup>40</sup>

As we can see from the quotation above, Jauhari mentioned a certain FM radio without stating its exact name. As I highlighted in italic, he mentioned three languages (Sundanese, Javanese, and Indonesian) that are used in announcements. To the best of my knowledge, only the Salafi radio Darussalaf FM in Surakarta has this kind of public services announcements (*iklan layanan masyarakat*) in several languages. From this, we can conclude that the radio station Jauhari was talking about must have been Darussalaf FM.

In some lectures (*kajian*) Ma'had Al-Madinah organized and broadcast on Al-Madinah FM, tacit reactions to the criticism appeared. A most recent *kajian*, for instance, dealing with acquiring honor by pursuing Islamic knowledge, was delivered by Abdul Mu'thi al-Maidany. It was broadcast on 23 November 2014. The last part of *kajian* was a question and answer session. Before this last session, al-Maidany explicated the ten ethics of knowledge pursuit according to Salih al-'Uthaimin. The seventh of them is to teach knowledge by way of *hikmah* (wisdom). To explain this, al-Maidany cited Q. 16: 125.<sup>41</sup> He said, 'Do not cause others to go away from the Prophet's Sunnah. Many of our *ikhwan* (friends or brothers) met a new friend, and they talked to him about *fitnah* (libel).' To further explain this point, Al-Maidany narrated a story of a Hindu in Kalimantan who

wanted to embrace Islam but failed to do so. The Hindu became increasingly interested in Islam as he often listened to a *dakwah* radio station. The radio station was not purely *Ahl al-Sunnah*. Some founders or managers of the station had been criticized for this. The Hindu consulted a Salafi teacher about his intention of converting to Islam. The Hindu was a company boss and had an employee who claimed to be a true Salafi (*Salafi sejati*). Knowing that his boss wanted to turn Muslim because he listened to that 'not-true' Salafi radio, he went to his boss to explain the deviations broadcasted on that radio station. As a consequence of this, the Hindu failed to convert to Islam. This narrative is important since it is related to the current situation in which Ma'had Al-Madinah is grappling with *fitnah*. The questions raised and the answers given during the session were also timely linked to this situation. Among the questions were how to be consistent in the pursuit of religious knowledge and how to behave towards those preoccupied with making *fitnah*. To these questions, al-Maidany suggested the members of the audience to keep away from *fitnah* and to busy themselves with study. He also suggested they invite those perpetrators of *fitnah* to come to the *pengajian*. He then reminded the members of his audience that they might possibly be rejected by saying: 'Oh no. It's impossible, because your teacher (*ustadh*) has got a *tahdhir* (warning).'<sup>42</sup> Al-Maidany emphasized that it is not important with whom they study as long as the teacher belongs to the *Ahl al-Sunnah*.

The other question concerned the Islamic ruling on the pursuit of an academic degree to meet the requirements for a higher career despite the fact that the pursuer was already qualified even without having a degree. Answering the question, al-Maidany emphasized the intention and method of pursuing a diploma or academic degree. According to him, this is a worldly matter (*masalah duniawi*). As long as the intention and method is good, there is no problem with that kind of pursuit of an academic

degree. This question was linked to the fact that some teachers from Ma'had Al-Madinah were pursuing higher academic degrees to uphold their career. Abu Ahmad Rahmat, for instance, is pursuing a bachelor degree to meet the requirements to become a teacher by attending courses at *Universitas Terbuka* (UT, Open University). UT is organized based on Presidential Decree No. 41 of 1984. One of the purposes of UT's establishment was 'to provide higher education services for those who, because of their work or due to other reasons, are not able to further their studies in face-to-face prominent higher education institutions.'<sup>43</sup> The UT follows a distance and open learning system, meaning that learning is not held face-to-face and that no age limitation exist.

## 5 Bringing Salafism to the door

Many Salafis in Surakarta are very much engaged with media technologies, either for *dakwah* purposes or for daily interaction. Radio is one of the most popular yet influential media they use on a daily basis, especially to connect with Islamic sermons delivered by Salafi teachers. In 2013, I visited Ma'had Imam Bukhori in Surakarta. I was especially interested in how Salafis stayed connected through radio sermons. When I entered the minimarket of this *Ma'had*, a radio set was tuned on and a sermon was being aired. The sermon, as the minimarket keeper said, was relayed from Rodja Radio. This implies the kind of network that they had made with other Salafis. Ma'had Imam Bukhori previously had a radio station. It sought to get the legal broadcasting permit but failed to finish the procedure. In the same year, I visited Ma'had Al-Ukhuwah in Sukoharjo. A number of students confirmed that previously a number of radio receivers had once been distributed to the students in order to enable them to listen to Suara Quran FM. All this indicates that the radio medium was very important.

I met a Salafi young man who was a listener of Suara Quran FM. He had studied in Ma'had Darussalaf for two years. When he made friends with Salafis from other groups, he got a *tahdhir* (warning) from his fellow students in Ma'had Darussalaf. He decided to join another Salafi group. His seemingly 'traumatic' experience with Ma'had Darussalaf even made him reluctant to discuss it. When I mentioned Ma'had Darussalaf, he hastily said, 'Don't ever talk about Darussalaf, I don't like it (*Jangan sekali-kali bicara soal Darussalaf. Saya tidak suka*)'. After that, he regularly listened to Suara Quran FM. When Suara Quran FM was rarely broadcast, he decided to regularly listen to Rodja Radio, which is based far away from his hometown, using a parabola receiver. He admitted that it was unfortunate that Suara Quran FM could not reach a wider listening audience since fanatic listeners of this radio had already turned into a kind of community in which its members knew each other well. This was irrespective of the fact that not all of them met face-to-face. Some knew each other only digitally. He described his relation with Suara Quran as follows, 'In terms of (Islamic) knowledge, Rodja is superior to Suara Quran FM, but in terms of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood) Suara Quran FM is superior and irreplaceable.' At present, he is a supplier of the Rodja TV antenna sets that are commercially distributed throughout Surakarta. Interestingly, he put a radio and a TV in his workplace so that he, his wife, and his children were always connected to Rodja Radio and Rodja TV. In order to maintain his digital relationship with listeners of Rodja Radio and viewers of Rodja TV, he opened a Facebook group called *Komunitas Pemirsa Rodja TV*. It was interesting to talk about what radio stations he would recommend. At the top, he suggested me to listen to Rodja Radio (as a substitution of Suara Quran FM). He himself acknowledged that he had his own reason for not listening to Al-Madinah FM. Unfortunately he did not explain the reason. And, on Darussalaf FM, he strongly recommended me not to listen to it, again, without giving me his reason.

Non-Salafi listeners have their own reason for listening to Salafi radio. Most of them found that Salafi radio aired Islamic programs that fit in with their prior knowledge and ideology. Those coming from *abangan* backgrounds or lay Muslims benefitted from listening to no matter what *dakwah* radio station, including Salafi radio, in order to get and increase knowledge about Islam. They did not relate their listening preferences to a certain ideological stance to which they belonged. Sometimes listeners preferred a specific Salafi radio because it offered Islamic insights they liked most. Two examples from my field notes might clarify how Salafi radio brought Salafism into the home and how common listeners received Salafi messages. One example is Ibu Farida, 45 years old. I have already told a bit of her story in chapter two and I want to add a bit more here. She is not Javanese, but Betawi (Batavian, Jakarta) by origin. She lives in Boyolali, west of Surakarta. As she acknowledged, she was ignorant of Islam. She had become a listener to Al-Madinah FM for two years. Before that, she already knew about other *dakwah* radio stations like MTA FM and Al-Hidayah FM, but she was not satisfied with them. She was not interested in them because she heard on one of those radio stations that ‘big sinners would never enter heaven’ (*pelaku dosa besar tidak bakal masuk surga*). She listened to Al-Madinah FM while her husband was working outside. She listened to it while cooking, washing, cleaning, and doing other things, from 09.00 until midday. She was happy when her husband was out working, since she would be free to listen to the radio. When she was listening to the radio while her husband was at home, he was not happy, especially not because Al-Madinah FM is a Salafi radio station. She said that for her husband, Salafis are radical (*orang-orang keras*). Once he said to her, ‘Don’t listen to Al-Madinah all the time, your will be brainwashed.’ (*Kamu jangan mendengarkan Al-Madinah melulu, nanti otakmu kecuci*). He thought that his wife believed more in Al-Madinah FM than in him. By listening to Al-



Madinah FM, she learned important lessons on Islam like *mubtilat al-Islam* or *nawaqiz* (things that invalidate Islam) and *al-usul al-thalathah* (three principles of Islam). Both *mubtilat al-Islam* and *al-usul al-thalathah* are part of the principles of Salafi teaching.<sup>44</sup>

The second is Pak Ahmadi, a former village head from Sukoharjo. He is 60 years old. He is not a Salafi. He was born into a Muhammadiyah family and he went to Muhammadiyah schools. He regularly listened to Al-Madinah FM in the morning and in the afternoon. He admitted that he had listened to various Islamic radio stations until he heard of Al-Madinah FM. He can be considered as a keen Al-Madinah FM listener. When disconnected with Al-Madinah FM, he felt loss. He was willing to make a donation to Al-Madinah FM to help it to gain the broadcasting permit. His interest in Al-Madinah FM stemmed only from his preference to certain aspects it broadcasts rather than from any inclination to Salafism. He became interested in Al-Madinah FM because he found that it provided him with clear and firm explanations about Islam. For him, a *pengajian* (Islamic lesson) should be seriously and not be mixed with humor or amusements. This serious kind of Islamic lessons he found on Al-Madinah FM. During my conversation with him, he gave no indication that he was familiar with Salafi doctrines. This was different from Ibu Farida, who had become increasingly familiar with these doctrines like *mubtilat al-Islam* and *al-usul al-thalathah* as said above.

These two examples clearly demonstrate how different Salafism was received by common listeners to Salafi radio. It may be concluded that Ibu Farida was more influenced by Salafi teachings than Pak Ahmadi was. However, this different reception may also be interpreted in another way. Diversity of reception can be understood as the result of different contexts and of different interpretations of the messages communicated to the listeners. However, the willingness and interest of both Ibu Farida and Pak Ahmadi to listen to Islamic sermons broadcast on Al-Madinah FM

reveal how Salafi radio managed to create a condition in which Salafism penetrated into the daily lives of common Muslims. Like other media, the radio medium played an important role in the creation of what Pierre Bourdieu has termed a '*habitus*'. It would be misleading to conclude that the penetration of Salafism necessarily materializes into the total adoption of the Salafi way of life. There is no such total adoption. Even Salafis become accustomed to Salafism through various exercises. What is clear is that Salafism has become increasingly more embedded in the daily lives of Muslim commoners facilitated by such media as the radio. The radio is able to effectively produce a sort of infrastructure for Salafi *dakwah*. In the following section, I will briefly discuss non-Salafis' critical responses to Salafi radio stations.

## 6 Responses to Salafi radio stations: a brief note

Above I just presented the reception of some listeners to Salafi radio. In the fourth section above, I have set forth the comment of a Salafi teacher, Abu Ahmad Rahmat, about non-Salafi radio stations. In this section, I would like to discuss the responses of non-Salafis to Salafi *dakwah* as aired on the radio. It should be kept in mind that in Surakarta each radio station tends to avoid making a direct mention of the name of the radio station it is criticizing. Therefore, it would be safe to see how a *dakwah* radio preacher or director commented on the Salafi *dakwah*. This will clarify the position a radio preacher or a radio station takes in response to the Salafi movement. I like to offer two examples. The first comes from MTA FM via Ahmad Sukino, and the other from Al-Hidayah FM via Soni Parsono. MTA shares with Salafis its puritan orientation and its call for true Islam as prescribed in the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Both hold that Islam must not be blended with local traditions and cultures. Seen from these commonalities, the MTA is not that critical to Salafis. Some people consider that MTA is Salafi-Wahabi, a view that the MTA has rejected.<sup>45</sup>

In the *Jihad Pagi* session of 30 September 2013, for instance, Ahmad Sukino received a question about Salafi *dakwah*. The questioner was from Madiun, East Java. He asked about Salafi *dakwah*. The reason why he raised the question was that he listened to a Salafi radio station in his city. He reported that once a Salafi teacher of the radio station was questioning the method the MTA used in interpreting the Qur'an. In reply, Ahmad Sukino commented that as long as the Qur'an and the Sunnah are used as the sources of the *dakwah*, there is no difference between the MTA and Salafis. If there is a difference in interpretation, mutual respect is needed. In this session, he used the example of the different opinions about the obligation of doing the Friday prayer in a mosque and its non-obligation for women. For Sukino, the Friday prayer can be done at home, and women are obliged to perform Friday prayer even at home. In the end of his explanation, he said, 'Therefore, if the *dakwah* Salafis conduct is based on the Qur'an and the Sunnah, it is the same (as MTA does)'. He emphasized that there is no need to claim to be the sole owner of the truth.<sup>46</sup> This comment Ahmad Sukino made is too general in the sense that it was not directed toward a particular Salafi radio station or a Salafi group. However, as mentioned above, the context of the question clarifies that it was related to a discussion that had popped up on a Salafi radio station in Madiun that explicitly criticized the MTA. Furthermore, the MTA is also very critical of Salafis as can be seen from several themes discussed in the *Jihad Pagi* sessions, like wearing *isbal* and growing a long beard. *Isbal* is wearing trousers right to the ankle. For Salafis, this way of wearing trousers is forbidden (*haram*). In several *Jihad Pagi* sessions, Ahmad Sukino dealt with *isbal* and growing a long beard (*jenggot*). He holds that both are not obligations.

The next example is a brief comment made by Soni Parsono, the director of Al-Hidayah FM. It should be noted that this radio station is culturally close to the NU (Nahdlatul Ulama).

Al-Hidayah FM clearly aimed to counter the emergence of new Muslim groups some of which also spread their *dakwah* on radio. Although it claims to be a radio station that adheres to the ideology of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*, it clearly differs from Salafi radio stations. The difference lies in the fact that Al-Hidayah FM, like the NU, adheres to the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* through the interpretation of the *madhhab*. Surprisingly, Soni Parsono acknowledged that the Salafi *dakwah* was better than that of the MTA. According to him, this is because Salafi preachers always make clear references to ulama rather than merely referring to the Qur'an and the *hadith* as the MTA does.<sup>47</sup>

## 7 Concluding remarks

This chapter started with the questions as to how existing Salafi radio stations in Surakarta help us to understand the current development of the Salafi movement. From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the current Salafi movement has become fragmented into three groups. One group consists of those previously not involved in the Laskar Jihad, and the other two consist of ex-Laskar Jihad members. Referring to the Salafi radio stations in Surakarta, these three groups are represented by three radio stations, Suara Quran FM, Darussalaf FM, and Al-Madinah FM. Suara Quran FM is managed by Salafi teachers of the non-Laskar Jihad group. It has connections with the broad Salafi networks like Rodja Radio and KPMI (Community of Indonesian Muslim Entrepreneurs). Darussalaf FM, under the umbrella of Ma'had Darussalaf, is managed by former members of the Laskar Jihad who are critical of Ja'far Umar Thalib, its former commander. It also has connections with the Luqman Baabduh network. The radio stations owned by those within this network are united within the network of Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia, which is a branch of Miraath.net, based in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Miratsul Anbiya Indonesia itself was formerly named 'Dammaj Al-Habib', which

indicates the Yemeni connection. The change in name indicates not only the widening of its network, but also the changing patronage of it, from Yemeni to Saudi Arabian ulama. Like Darussalaf FM, Al-Madinah FM, which belongs to Ma'had Al-Madinah, is managed by ex-members of the Laskar Jihad and former students of Ja'far Umar Thalib. However, they were more open to Thalib and other groups. The most important figure among them is Dzulqarnain, the former head of the *fatwa* section of the Laskar Jihad.

The engagement with Salafi radio stations as reported above demonstrates that listeners' receptions of Salafism differed. For Salafi listeners, it is clear that listening to them has connected them with Salafi teachers. For commoners, Salafi radio stations taught them about 'true' Islam. Without being involved in the Salafi movement, they were introduced to Salafism's basic teachings. All this is ample evidence of the way Salafism has become incorporated into the daily lives of Muslim commoners. A brief discussion on the reaction of Ahmad Sukino of MTA FM and Soni Parsono of Al-Hidayah FM illustrates how complicated current Islamic movements in Surakarta are, and this complexity is reflected in their media practices.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The earlier draft of this chapter has been accepted by *Archipel* journal, Paris, in April 2015,
- <sup>2</sup> For a brief account of LIPIA, see <http://www.lipia.org/index.php/ct-menu-item-3/ct-menu-item-17>; also Hasan 2006: 47-51; and Wahid 2014: 86-88.
- <sup>3</sup> The text can be downloaded from <http://salafuna.files.wordpress.com/2010/05/surat-taubat-jafar-umar-thalib.pdf>; and the Indonesian translation from <http://sunnij.wordpress.com/2010/05/20/surat-taubat-al-ustadz-jafar-umar-thalib/> (accessed 19 November 2014).
- <sup>4</sup> To my knowledge, this group has no radio station so that I leave this group aside from the discussion on the Salafi radio network.
- <sup>5</sup> Meijer (2011: 375-99) has extensively studied al-Madkhali's thought on the politicization of *al-jarh wa-l ta'dil* and its influence on the transnational Salafi movement.
- <sup>6</sup> The Arabic text and the translation of the letter can be found at <http://tukpencarialhaq.com/2013/12/14/tahdzir-asy-syaikh-robi-bin-hady-al-madkhaly-terhadap-dzulqarnain/> (accessed 24 November 2014).

- <sup>7</sup> According to Wahid (2014: 40), Wahdah Islamiyah, based in Makassar, belongs to the *tanzimi* Salafi group since it holds that Salafi *dakwah* needs an organization or needsds to be organized in order to be able to face current challenges. It was established in 1988 as the Yayasan Fathul Muin (YFM) which had changed into the Yayasan Wahdah Islamiyah (YWI) in 1998. It teaches about Islam based on the Quran and Sunnah according to the understanding of the pious Muslim ancestors (*salaf al-salih*). For a brief history of Wahdah Islamiyah, see <http://wahdah.or.id/sejarah-berdiri-manhaj/> (accessed 1 December 2014).
- <sup>8</sup> His full name is Yahya bin Ali bin Ahmad bin Ya'qub al-Hajuri.
- <sup>9</sup> A summary of the recordings of Baabduh's question-answer session in the *daurah* can be found at <http://forumsalafi.net/?p=119> (accessed: 3 December 2014).
- <sup>10</sup> A recording of al-Hajuri's *tahdhir* to Baabduh can be found at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=vARVDnM3vIo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=vARVDnM3vIo) (accessed 3 December 2014).
- <sup>11</sup> They established a blog called Ashabul Hadits (the students of hadith) at <https://ashhabulhadits.wordpress.com/profile/>
- <sup>12</sup> Unfortunately I have been unable to consult the book. A small part of the book can be found at <http://aloloom.net/vb/showthread.php?t=2730> (accessed 3 December 2014).
- <sup>13</sup> They are *Kasr uluiyat uli al-idrar bi dahr hujumihim 'ala al-abrar* and *Tanbih al-nuqqad al-abrar 'ala ittiham al-muslih bi al-ghuluw wa-l idrar*. Both can be downloaded from <https://thaifahalmanshurah.wordpress.com/author/thaifahalmanshurah/page/7/>
- <sup>14</sup> See the *fatwa* and its Indonesian translation at <http://www.salafybpp.com/index.php/manhaj-salaf/127-fatwa-lajnah-daimah-tentang-buku-karya-ali-hasan-al-halabi> (accessed 3 December 2014).
- <sup>15</sup> The recording of his advice to the supporters of *takfir* (declaring the infidelity of somebody or excommunication) ideology can be found at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yo7RWwaw8Q> (accessed 3 December 2014); and his interview on a national TV station can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-fnhDGEFoY> (accessed 3 December 2014).
- <sup>16</sup> <http://www.alukhuwah.com/tentang-kami/> (accessed 5 November 2014).
- <sup>17</sup> <http://www.alukhuwah.com/2014/02/radio-sq-abror-fm/> (accessed 29 October 2014)
- <sup>18</sup> <http://www.insantv.com/statis-1-profil.html> (accessed 7 November 2014).
- <sup>19</sup> The mailing list address is <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/pengusaha-muslim>.
- <sup>20</sup> <http://www.kpmi.or.id/tentang-kami.shtml> (accessed 7 November 2014).
- <sup>21</sup> The 26 coordinating areas are: Jakarta, Depok, Kepulauan Riau, Priatim, Bulukumba, Sumbawa, Pekanbaru, Bogor, Karawang, Solo (Surakarta), Magelang, Surabaya, Palembang, Tangerang Raya, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Balikpapan, Mojokerto, Banyumas, Bekasi, Kalimantan Selatan, Semarang, Makasar, Malang, Medan, and Egypt. <http://www.kpmi.or.id/korwil> (accessed 7 November 2014).
- <sup>22</sup> Information about this Ma'had can be found in the recorded sermon given by Abu Nashim Mukhtar entitled 'Romantika Muda Mudi Dalam Thalabul Ilmu' (Question-Answer Session), can be downloaded from <http://miratsul-anbiya.net/audio/dauroh-sumpiuh-romantika-muda-mudi-dalam-thalabul-ilmi/> (accessed 11 November 2014). Abu Nashim Mukhtar is a Salafi teacher at Ma'had Darussalaf FM.
- <sup>23</sup> The pamphlet is downloadable from <https://www.scribd.com/doc/239148067/Agama-Itu-Adalah-Nasihat> (accessed 13 November 2014).
- <sup>24</sup> The article is entitled 'Fatwa Para Ulama Besar Menyikapi Terorisme,' published in *An-Nashihah* magazine, 3: 1 (2002), pp. 2-20.

- <sup>25</sup> As an example, see the catalogue of *tasjilat* containing the price of each at <http://atsary.wordpress.com/2008/04/02/katalog-tasjilat-al-madinah-surakarta/> (accessed 19 November 2014).
- <sup>26</sup> On him, see <http://www.alfawaaid.net/2013/04/biografi-al-ustadz-abu-abdillah.html> (accessed 10 November 2014).
- <sup>27</sup> <http://www.miraathpublications.net>.
- <sup>28</sup> <http://miratsul-anbiya.net/muqaddimah/> (accessed 1 December 2014).
- <sup>29</sup> Personal communication with Abu Ahmad Rahmat, Surakarta, 27 March 2014.
- <sup>30</sup> See, for instance, <http://www.kajiansunnah.net/2011/12/audio-jeda-rodja-download.html> (accessed 17 November 2014).
- <sup>31</sup> The abbreviation KITA sounds as if it has nothing to do with Islam, since KITA in Indonesian means 'we'. However, it stands for *Kajian Islam dan Tilawah Al-Qur'an* (Islamic Study and Recitation of the Qur'an).
- <sup>32</sup> <http://www.radioassunnah.com/profil-radio-sunnah-kita-fm/> (accessed 6 November 2014).
- <sup>33</sup> The *hadith* runs as follows: '*Inna-ma al-surah al-ra's. Fa-idha quti'a fa-la surah lah*'.
- <sup>34</sup> <http://www.darussalaf.or.id/manhaj/hukum-gambar-di-dalam-tv-bagaimana-dengan-tv-rodja/> (accessed 18 November 2014).
- <sup>35</sup> <http://pelita-sunnah.blogspot.nl/2014/02/hukum-mendengarkan-radio-atau-menonton.html> (accessed 18 November 2014).
- <sup>36</sup> The text of agreement can be seen at <http://pelita-sunnah.blogspot.nl/2013/12/naskah-ishlah-dai2-salaf-tahun-2005-m.html> (20 November 2014).
- <sup>37</sup> Baabduh's sermons broadcast on Darussalaf FM may be found on its website, <http://www.darussalafsolo.com/kajian-ustadz-luqman-baabduh> (accessed 20 November 2014).
- <sup>38</sup> The *daurah* was held on 26-27 January 2013 at the Ibnu Taimiyah mosque, Ma'had Darussalaf, Surakarta and was broadcast on Darussalaf FM. The recording of As-Sidawi's lecture can be downloaded from its website: <http://www.darussalafsolo.com/kajian-ustadz-afiffuddin-as-sidawi/> (accessed 20 November 2014).
- <sup>39</sup> The recording of this lecture can be downloaded from <http://www.mahad-alfaruq.com/audio-kajian-islam-ilmiah-romantika-muda-mudi-dalam-tholabul-ilmi/> (accessed 24 November 2014).
- <sup>40</sup> '*Ada masalah sedikit, sudah disiarkan lewat radio, sehingga orang-orang awam yang mungkin membuka radio tersebut, ... Mungkin didengarkan, ada pengumuman, ada pengumannya dengan bahasa Sunda, misalnya, dan ada bahasa Jawanya, ada mungkin juga bahasa Indonesianya...*'
- <sup>41</sup> It says, '*Invite (all) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious...*'
- <sup>42</sup> '*Oh nggak. Nggak bisa, karena ustadmu itu di-tahdir.*'
- <sup>43</sup> <http://www.ut.ac.id/en/ut-in-brief.html> (accessed 24 November 2014).
- <sup>44</sup> *Mubtilat al-Islam* or *mawaqiz al-Islam* is discussed in a pamphlet written by 'Abd al-'Aziz bin Baz, while *al-usul al-thalathah* refers to the title of a small treatise written by Muhammad bin 'Abd al-Wahhab, founder of Wahhabism.
- <sup>45</sup> See, for instance, Sya'roni As-Samfuriy, 'Salaf-Wahabi, sekte yang terpecah-belah dan saling menghujat', at <http://www.lppimakassar.net/takfiri/salafi-wahabi-sekte-yang-terpecah-belah-dan-saling-menhujat>
- <sup>46</sup> The video of the session is available at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odbhh9Rc\\_PM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odbhh9Rc_PM) (accessed 1 May 2015).
- <sup>47</sup> Personal communication with Soni Parsono, Sukoharjo, 14 June 2012.

# CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 1 Introduction

The interest to write this book stemmed partly from my personal experience living in a society where radio still plays an important role in religious life. This is a bit surprising, since newer media technologies are available and easily accessible to almost everyone. For me, listening to radio sermons was not a new experience. In the 1980s, I listened to them on a regular basis. Especially during Ramadan, it became a preparation for breaking the fast. At that time, one of my favorite preachers was Zainuddin MZ (d. 2011). Jakartan by origin, he was on the top of his career as a national-scaled preacher, best known as *da'i sejuta umat* (preacher of one million *ummah*). Almost every radio station throughout the country aired his cassette-sermons. Moving from Demak, my birthplace, to Surakarta, I was struck not only by the unending important role of radio broadcasting, but also by the diverse Islamic opinions aired by *dakwah* radio stations, something that I



had not encountered in the 1980s. As a newcomer in Surakarta, I was somewhat annoyed by the contrasting voices of Islam entering my ears, and by what I considered improper for non-experts in Islam (neither *kyai* nor *pesantren* graduates) to speak for Islam and produce *fatwas*. All of my initial experience and my doctrinal position concerning who deserved to speak in the name of Islam were challenged. As time passed, my ears became accustomed to hear the different versions of Islam coming out of the radio that my uncle-in-law switched on every morning and night or out of the radio of the neighbors.

This book discusses *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta after the fall of the New Order Regime in 1998, and examines their role in the construction of religious authority. The primary questions I address in this book are to *what extent and how did dakwah radio play roles in the changing patterns of religious authority?* and *how was religious authority constructed and contested through the radio?* As stated in the introductory chapter, these questions will be answered by way of addressing the secondary questions that follow the primary ones: *How and to what extent did MTA FM play a role in Ahmad Sukino's emergence to prominence? How did he construct his authority through MTA FM in competition with others?* In the preceding chapters, I have explored the multi-layered aspects of my analysis. In Chapter Two, I have presented various stories that I came across during my fieldwork in order to describe how Muslims in Surakarta incorporated their radio listening experience into their daily lives. In Chapter Three, I described the changing *dakwah* environment after the New Order Era that led to the upsurge of radio preachers. In Chapters Four, Five, and Six, I investigated how radio preachers established authority and exercised their power through their preaching activities and the languages they used in their sermons. I have given an example of how radio broadcasting has turned into an important platform for producing and spreading *fatwas*. In Chapter Seven, I focused on

Salafi radio stations in order to delineate how the dynamics of the Salafi movement have taken place on air.

By way of conclusion, the following sections discuss the findings of my research in order to answer both the primary and the secondary questions. Firstly, I will recapitulate my previous investigation into the roles of *dakwah* radio in the changing patterns of religious authority. Secondly, I will focus on how religious authority has been constructed and contested through the radio medium. In the last part of this chapter, I will offer some recommendations for further research on Islam and media in Indonesia.

## **2 *Dakwah* radio in the changing patterns of religious authority**

In Indonesia, religious authority remains influential in society; religion is definitely one of the ‘thick’ structures in society. Ulama still play important roles in contemporary Indonesia. However, it is clear that over time the monopoly of the ulama over religious discourses and authority has been challenged. One of the challenges Indonesian ulama face in the modern era has been the rise of the modern media as instruments of religious communication. The new media inaugurated an era in which Islam lost its monolithic quality in two senses: (a) several schools and layers of authority now compete in a densely polycentric environment, and (b) Islam itself has been broken down into commodified objects, propagated by the new media, and more and more Muslims consume things Islamic. What follows will explore these two points.

In Chapter Three, I revealed the multi-layered forms of authority behind the establishment of *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta. They are connected to Islamic educational institutions, including *masjid*, *pesantren* and *majlis taklim*. They are extensions of these institutions. Organized by non-governmental organizations or

individuals, they represent diverse interests and interpretations of Islam as reflected in the Islamic discourses they aired. Still in Chapter Three, I identified three dominant discourses, that of the *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* (Followers of the prophetic Sunnah and the Islamic Community) or Sunni, purification versus indigenization of Islam, and the implementation of the *shari'ah*. These discourses encapsulated the core debates on what Islam is and what and how Islam should be practiced in a Muslim society. The interpretations of Islam given by *dakwah* radio stations was clearly diverse. Some stations in Surakarta explicitly declared their identity as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*, while others did so implicitly. Radio stations ideologically linked to the NU and Salafis explicitly declared themselves as *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* stations. Other stations implicitly declared their *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* orientation by contrasting it with Shi'ism. Related to local Islamic practices, radio programs clearly took two different positions. Some stations aspired to purifying Islam from local practices while others wanted to maintain them. While supporters of the local practices come from an NU background, supporters of the purification are commonly linked to modernist groups like the Muhammadiyah and newer puritan groups like the MTA and Salafis. None of *dakwah* radio stations demanded the establishment of an Islamic State, but some stations supported the formalization of the implementation of the *shari'ah*.

The polycentric environment *dakwah* radio stations created in Surakarta led to the rise of radio preachers. In Chapter Four, I discussed them. Seen from their educational background, not all of them were trained in traditional institutions like *pesantren* or *madrasah*. In terms of their religious appellations, they consist of *kyai*, *habib* and *ustadh*. While *kyai* and *habib* may be considered old forms of religious authority, *ustadh* represent a new form of this authority. It should be noted, however, that with the advent of modern media both old and new forms of religious authority

have been steeped deeply into the currents of modern popular culture. Their rise was definitely bolstered by new *dakwah* environments characterized by the increase in the production and the consumption of things Islamic, a process called religious commodification. Side by side with this, the high demand for radio sermons stimulated the professional career of radio preachers. Their sermons became commodities in the forms of publicly sold sermons on CDs. Transformed from community to commercial radio, some *dakwah* radio stations started to make money from using their airtimes for advertising instead of relying solely on donations from their congregations. They became powerful *dakwah* radio stations.

The success of MTA FM and the rise of Ahmad Sukino is an example of the significant roles a *dakwah* radio station has in changing complex patterns of religious authority. Founded in 2005, it became an effective medium for the MTA and Ahmad Sukino to gain public popularity. Previously, the MTA was a local organization known only to people in Surakarta and its environments. Currently, it has gained a national following with hundreds of thousands members. Ahmad Sukino replaced his predecessor, Abdullah Thufail, the founder of the MTA, in 1992. Before MTA FM was established, like the MTA, Sukino was known only to people in Surakarta and its surrounding areas. His popularity skyrocketed after his sermons were broadcast on radio, first on HIZ FM and later on MTA FM. As a religious personality, he was considered by his critics, either from the NU or others like Salafis, as lacking Islamic credentials. His religious knowledge and lack of command of Arabic has been considerably questioned. However, this criticism did not erase the fact that he succeeded in establishing himself as a religious personality thanks to his media savvy.

As analyzed in Chapter Four, the controversial figure of Ahmad Sukino challenged the established old forms of authority connected to *pesantrains* like *kyai* and *habib*, and new ones like Salafis. Kyai

Marzuki Mustamar criticized him of being ignorant of *kitab kuning* (classic Arabic book). For Mustamar, a religious personality should have a deep command of *kitab kuning*. Habib Yahya attacked his call to a return to the Qur'an and the Sunnah while inviting common Muslims to return to the teaching of the *Walisongo* (Nine Saints). Salafis vehemently criticized his low command of Islamic methodology and Arabic. In my opinion, their criticism failed to see the fact that Ahmad Sukino used radio as an effective tool for establishing his authority and even for countering any kind of criticism. This meant that the power of his messages relied not so much upon his religious erudition but on his success in reaching a wide audience. The assessment of his intellectual credibility, thus, depended very much on the willingness of his audience to accept his messages rather than on the level of his erudition. In this regard, the extent to which a preacher like Ahmad Sukino managed to mobilize his rhetorical tools to persuade and convince his audience was determinant. Here we note that the scale of communication changed considerably, facilitated by the modern media like radio. Furthermore, modern media contributed to the changing criteria of who has the right to speak for Islam in other words, who has religious authority. I argue that the authority that Ahmad Sukino subscribes to is a mediatized form of authority.

It can be concluded that *dakwah* radio contributed to creating a polycentric system of authority which led to the rise of radio preachers. With reference to MTA and Ahmad Sukino, *dakwah* radio played a crucial role as a key tool for establishing his religious authority.

### 3 Constructing and competing religious authority

Contestation and competition among *dakwah* radio stations for religious authority involved various attempts to gain public and legal recognition. I described these issues in Chapter Three

that networking often functioned effectively as a capital resource to strengthen their position in society. All of them established networks with other religious institutions like *pesantren* and *majlis taklim* as mentioned above. Important also was access to political power like political parties and governmental officials. To obtain a broadcasting license, a substantial amount of money is definitely needed. However, networking played a no less crucial role. Again, MTA FM is a telling example of how a radio station spent a great deal of energy to gain public and legal recognition. The MTA's good relations with the local and central MUI and governmental officials like ministers and the president was crucial to strengthening its social position and to gain legal recognition. Ideologically, the MTA never declared itself to be a follower of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah*. This stance often became the target of criticism by its rivals, both from the NU and Salafis. By approaching the MUI, it succeeded in convincing its members that it was not an illegal or deviating organization as its rivals often accused it to be. The coming of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) in 2009 to launch the MTA's new building and the issuance of the broadcasting license were among MTA's successes in mobilizing its networks. In this regard, MTA FM excelled other *dakwah* radio stations.

In understanding how religious authority was constructed and contested, this study has examined some important aspects of radio broadcasting, including voice, language and discourses. How these aspects worked effectively is reflected in the example of Ahmad Sukino. First, voice (or sound) is the material culture (Tachhi 1994) of the radio medium. Scannell (1996: 36) suggests that with regard to radio, the voice is 'the only 'visible' physical quality that is available to listeners as a basis for making assessments of the speaking'. This forces us to pay attention to the role of the voice in the attempts of a radio preacher to claim authority. In Chapter Four, I specifically analyzed how the radio medium mediated religious

authority with a special focus on the controversial figure of Ahmad Sukino, the leader of the MTA. My analysis concentrates on the voice qualities of a radio preacher like Ahmad Sukino that proved crucial in the establishment of his religious authority. For some of his listeners, the force of his voice was not only in its 'touching' forces but also in its spiritual force to bring God's *hidayah* to them. It was able to open their consciousness to God's presence in their life. This extraordinary aspect of his voice demanded listeners to receive his radio sermons not only through the ears but also through pure hearts. Both Ahmad Sukino and his listeners were aware of their self-conception of what a proper way of listening to *dakwah* radio should be. While Ahmad Sukino constructed his conception by referring to Qur'anic texts related to listening to the truth, his listeners used local expressions like *ati* and *nalar budi* to understand the presence of God as *hidayah*. It should be noted, however, that such construction not always worked for other listeners because of the diverse ways they evaluated the efficacy of a radio sermon. I never heard listeners of other stations express such strong feelings of the divine presence by way of listening to a certain sermon. To sum up, the efficacy of a preacher's voice in strengthening his charisma is socially situated and thus constructed.

No doubt, language is one of the important material aspects of the radio medium. Scannell (1996: 165) says, 'To hear what is in the voice is to hear the ... languageness'. Language is what is between listeners, and what they share. Moreover, language is part of symbolic power (Bourdieu: 1992) through which a speaker can exercise his domination and power over others. The linguistic habitus manifested in the capacity of a radio preacher in using a 'legitimate language' in 'liturgical conditions' like sermons and others played an important role in making it efficacious. No less important is the linguistic market in which linguistic exchanges take place. As noted above, there is a discrepancy between a

preacher like Ahmad Sukino and his audience in terms of their reference to express the power of voice. The former refers to the textual sources of the Qur'an, which are in Arabic, and the latter use local Javanese idioms. In Chapter Five, I further examined the role of language. The language choice of radio sermons often reflects the ideologies of their users. For Muslims, Arabic is a sacred language, because it is the language through which God revealed His words (the Qur'an). Javanese can be an academic language for *pesantren* students (*santri*) through which they learn *kitab kuning*. Besides a national language, Indonesian can be considered a modern and urban language. Indonesian is the most dominant language used in radio sermons held inside the studio (in other words, 'studio sermons'). The use of Javanese was very rare. Interestingly, Salafi radio stations, including Suara Quran FM and Al-Madinah FM, broadcast Javanese sermon programs. The domination of Indonesian can be attributed to its position as the national language through which *dakwah* radio stations can reach wider audiences not restricted to Javanese speakers but also non-Javanese speakers. In terms of styles, studio radio sermons tend to be formal, serious, and low in humor. In terms of language use, 'external sermons', held outside the studio, demonstrate that Javanese is dominant, especially when sermons came from religious events related to life cycles like circumcision and marriage. Javanese is known for its complicated hierarchical styles of speech levels, which are roughly divided into *ngoko* and *kromo*, implying social hierarchies.

What is important to note is how a preacher switched from one language to another, from one style to another. Code switching is not as natural as one might assume. It indexes ideologies, identities, and authorities that radio preachers would like to claim. When referring to religious aspects or sacred texts, Arabic terms would dominate. When pointing out details of a book reference, they would prefer to use Indonesian. When addressing their



audiences, they would tend to use Javanese. For a preacher with a *pesantren* background, the use of a specific Javanese term would be meaningful to emphasize his authority as shown in the case of Parsono Agus Waluyo. Here we can see how theological polycentricism is mirrored in a large degree of linguistic and discursive diversity, in which different preachers deploy different linguistic resources to achieve the specific identity and the key to the relation they intend to establish with their audiences.

In Chapter Six, I have provided a specific example of how religious authority was exercised, which was through producing radio *fatwas*. *Fatwa* is one of the most important aspects of *dakwah* radio. Although the term '*fatwa*' is hardly used explicitly, the practices of questioning and answering (*tanya-jawab*) Islamic issues are evident. All *dakwah* radio stations in Surakarta have *tanya-jawab* programs dealing with various issues, ranging from theological, legal, and familial ones. I argue that these programs have long historical roots in the *fatwa* tradition in Islam. In Indonesia, such radio programs are not new. For instance, in the 1970s and the 1980s, Hamka (d. 1981) answered many questions on Islam sent by listeners of RRI (Radio of the Republic of Indonesia) from all over the country. Radio fatwas reflect certain standpoints that often contrastively differ between *dakwah* radio stations. This is what differentiates radio fatwas from *dakwah* radio from those of non-*dakwah* radio stations like RRI. The difference comes not only from the understanding of a radio mufti (or precisely in Indonesia, a radio preacher) but also from the ideological standpoint of the owner or the mother institution of a related *dakwah* radio station. As can be seen in the examples dealt with in this book, radio fatwas concerning the *hukm* (Islamic ruling) of the consumption of dog meat. Eating dog meat has been a heatedly debated issue in Surakarta. In formulating his *fatwa*, Ahmad Sukino, rather than referring to the opinions of previous Muslim scholars on the *hukm*, drew exclusively on the Qur'an.

This implies that the authority Ahmad Sukino wanted to establish is different from that of previous scholars. His *fatwa* reflects the ideological standpoint of the MTA regarding the legitimate source of Islam. The strength of his *fatwa* does not rest upon the sound method of legal reasoning he offered. Instead, the monological nature of the radio medium enabled him to control the power of his *fatwa*.

In contemporary Indonesian Islam, the MTA has often been amalgamated with newer groups like Salafis. It is considered part of the Wahhabi movement (see Wahyudi 2009). However, this amalgamation and identification are unhelpful to understand how complicated religious authority has been competed especially by those groups that share the aspiration of returning Islam to its original sources, the Qur'an and the Sunnah. As a comparison, in Chapter Seven, I drew attention to Salafi groups and their dealing with *dakwah* radio. In Surakarta, they are connected with three radio stations, including Suara Quran FM, Al-Madinah FM, and Darussalaf FM. Previous studies (for instance, Hasan 2006; Wahid 2014) noted that they were divided into Yemeni and non-Yemeni Salafi, *haraki* and non-*haraki*, and *sururi* and non-*sururi*, and others. This division is no longer valid, since they are far more fractured. As shown by radio stations in Surakarta, the division includes one non-Laskar Jihad group, and two former Laskar Jihad groups. The former is represented by Salafis who run Suara Quran FM in Surakarta and Rodja radio in Bogor, while the remaining two are represented by the owners of Al-Madinah FM and Darussalaf FM. These three stations represent the different networks of Salafi groups. As noted in this book, the establishment of these stations can be read as part of a contestation over their religious authority. Each of them tried to offer the true version of Salafism. Each claimed to be the legitimate representative of the true Salafi (*Salafi sejati*). The contestation has been colored by their respective attempts to gain support from Middle Eastern ulama.

#### 4 Contributions and recommendations for further research

I hope that this work has contributed to scholarship on media and religion and on Indonesian Islam in several ways. Firstly, I would be happy if it were seen as a contribution to scholarship on Islam in Indonesia, the largest Muslim nation in the world, where Islam appears in a multitude of shapes and denominations, often cohabiting uncomfortably in a polycentric context which is subject to rapid social change. Descriptively, I hope to have offered a sketch of the plurality of Islamic schools, practices and communities in (a particular part of) Indonesia, and to have convincingly shown that this complex environment is subject to nonstop, rapid and profound change.

Secondly, I hope to have contributed to the study of new media and their social and cultural impact in regions such as the one I documented here. The rapid and profound change mentioned earlier, I argued in this book, is to an important extent the effect of the widespread use and low-threshold accessibility of media such as *dakwah* radio. It is the proliferation of such mediatized forms of Islam that drives the highly dynamic polycentric system we described. The force of these media is not only visible at the level of the construction of audiences, multiple, complex audiences and relationships between audiences, to be more precise. It is also visible at an even more profound level: that of shifting religious authority, where an 'old order' of religious leadership is challenged and sometimes overtaken by a 'new order' of leadership which derives its authority from the skillful deployment of Islamic teaching in their media. I mentioned that this was a greatly surprising thing for me when I arrived in Surakarta: hearing people not traditionally qualified as outstanding Islamic scholars speak publicly and authoritatively on religious matters. This breach of leadership tradition is a form of sociocultural and religious

innovation that demands further scrutiny for it has effects on the structures of the communities who seek guidance from the old and new generations of leaders.

While it might sound trivial to scholars working in other areas of sociocultural research, it is important to underscore that Islam is no longer an ‘offline’ religion, the everyday realities of which can be understood by investigating sacred texts and scholarly sources, Friday prayer attendance in mosques, or by interviewing Imams and other established religious leaders. It has become a religious complex that operates both online, in the world of new media, and offline, with relationships between both domains being in constant flux, and with audiences shifting from one into another domain in sometimes unpredictable ways. In that sense, my study is a call for increased attention for what we could call ‘e-Islam’, those forms of Islam that operate through modern media, and the social, cultural, religious and even political effects they provoke by their presence on media platforms. It is also useful to note, in concluding this study, that such ‘e-Islamic’ phenomena are clearly not confined to those regions of the world where digital high-tech provision is maximal and, consequently, where studies of digital and new media practices are well established and self-evident, the Global North. Such studies, manifestly, are also relevant for areas in the Global South, such as Surakarta in Indonesia. When a phenomenon is globalized, it has become *global*, which means that it operates both in the ‘centers’ and the ‘margins’ of the world system; the modes of operation, however, can be profoundly different in different areas of the world (Wang et al. 2014). I hope, with this study, to have contributed to the foundations for a study of such aspects of globalization applied to contemporary forms of Islamic practice across the world.



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# GLOSSARY

*'arsh* God's throne

*abangan* nominal or non-observant Muslim

*Ahl al-Sunnah wa-l Jama'ah* Followers of the prophetic tradition  
and Islamic community

*al-salaf al-salih* past pious Muslims of first three generations; *also*  
*salaf al-ummah*

*Bahasa gaul* language of sociability

*bersih desa* village cleansing ritual

*bid'ah* reprehensible innovation in Islam

*da'i* preacher

*daurah* Islamic workshop

*dhikr* remembrance of God

*dukun* magician

*fatwa* Islamic legal opinion or advice

*fitnah* libel, slander

*grebeg maulud* celebration of the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad  
annually held in the palaces of Yogyakarta and Surakarta

*Habib* lit. the beloved, a title for Hadrami descent of the Prophet  
Muhammad

- hadith* reports on the Prophet's saying, deed and decision
- hajj* Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca
- halal* permissible
- halaqah* circle for Islamic study
- haraki* activist
- haram* forbidden
- hidayah* God's guidance
- hizbi* partisan
- hukm* Islamic ruling
- ifta'* giving a *fatwa*
- ijtihad* independent legal reasoning
- imam* prayer leader or Muslim leader
- imamah* Muslim leadership system (commonly used in the Shi'a School)
- isbal* wearing trousers right to the ankle
- istifta'* asking a *fatwa*
- jama'ah* congregation
- jenggot* long beard
- jihad* Islamic struggle
- jimat* amulets
- kafir* unbeliever
- khatib* Muslim preacher
- khilafah* caliphate
- khilafiyah* differences of opinion
- kitab kuning* lit. yellow book; classic Islamic books
- kromo* high Javanese
- kyai* Javanese Muslim leader, director of *pesantren*
- Kyai Kebo Slamet* the name of a sacred albino buffalo in Surakarta

- langgar* small house for prayer
- ma'had* a Salafi Islamic institute which is similar to *pesantren*
- madhhab* Islamic school of law
- madrasah* Islamic school
- majlis taklim* public place of Islamic study
- makruh* reprehensible
- manhaj* method
- modin* state-appointed religious official at a village level
- mu'allaf* convert
- muballigh* itinerant preacher
- mudir* the director of a *ma'had*
- muhadarah* lecture
- murshid* a Sufi master
- musalla* see *langgar*
- nasihah* advice
- ngelmu* Javanese mystic knowledge
- ngoko* low Javanese
- nikah sirri* lit. secret marriage. Marriage based on Islamic rule but not registered by the state
- pengajian* Islamic study gathering, sermon or lecture
- penghulu* religious judge
- perdukunan* magic, sorcery, charlatanism
- pesantren* Islamic boarding school
- primbon* a mystical book well known in Java
- priyayi* Javanese aristocrats
- sadaqah* charitable gift
- salaf al-ummah* see *al-salaf al-salih*
- salawat* praying the Prophet Muhammad



*santri* practicing/observant Muslim; *also* pious Muslim and student of *pesantren*

*sate anjing* dog meat skewers

*sesaji* offerings

*shafa'ah* intercession

*shari'ah* Islamic law

*silaturrahim* (or *silaturrahmi*) making a friendship tie

*slametan* communal feast

*sururi* followers of Muhammad Surur Zain bin Nayef al-'Abidin, a Salafi leader

*ta'yir* blaming

*tabayyun* clarification

*tahdhir* issuing a warning

*tahlilan* communal prayer for the dead

*takfir* excommunication; considering a Muslim *kafir*

*takmir* mosque manager

*tanya-jawab* question and answer

*tanzimi* a Salafi group which have an organizational orientation

*tawakkul* trust in God's will

*ummah* Muslim community

*umrah* little Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca

*unggah-unggahan* marriage offerings

*ustadh* religious teacher

*Walisongo* nine Javanese Muslim saints

*zakat* Islamic obligatory tithe

# ABBREVIATIONS

- DI/TII *Darul Islam/Tentara Islam Indonesia*  
FKAWJ *Forum Komunikasi Ahlussunnah Wa-l Jama'ah*  
FM *Frequency Modulation*  
FPI *Front Pembela Islam*  
FPIS *Front Pemuda Islam Surakarta*  
HTI *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*  
IAIN *Institut Agama Islam Negeri*  
Jamuro *Jamaah Muji Rosul*  
Jamuri *Jamaah Muji Rasul Putri*  
Jihad Pagi *Pengajian Ahad Pagi*  
JIL *Jaringan Islam Indonesia*  
KAMMI *Kesatuan Aksi Mahasiswa Muslim Indonesia*  
KPID *Komisi Penyiaran Indonesia Daerah*  
KPMI *Komunitas Pengusaha Muslim Indonesia*  
MMI *Majelis Mujahidin Indonesia*  
MTA *Majlis Tafsir Al-Qur'an*  
MUI *Majelis Ulama Indonesia*  
NU *Nahdlatul Ulama*

PAN *Partai Amanat Nasional*  
PDI-P *Partai Demokrasi Indonesia Perjuangan*  
Persis *Persatuan Islam*  
PKB *Partai Kebangkitan Bangsa*  
PKNU *Partai Kebangkitan Nasional Ulama*  
PKS *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera*  
RBA *Radio Bani Adam*  
RDS *Radio Dakwah Syariah*  
RWS *Radio Wali Songo*  
SD *Sekolah Dasar*  
SMP *Sekolah Menengah Pertama*  
SMA *Sekolah Menengah Atas*  
UIN *Universitas Islam Negeri*  
UT *Universitas Terbuka*  
YATAIN *Yayasan Tauhid Indonesia*

# CURRICULUM VITAE

Sunarwoto was born in Demak, Central Java, in 1975. He received his primary and secondary education in his hometown. In 1990, he moved to Kediri, East Java, to pursue his senior high school while studying at traditional Islamic boarding school (*pondok pesantren*) in *Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah* and *Lirboy* Kediri. In 1994, he started his Bachelor at the department of Qur'anic exegesis and Muhammadan tradition at the faculty of Usuluddin, IAIN Yogyakarta and completed it in 1999. In 2007, he received scholarship for his MA in Islamic studies from Leiden University, the Netherlands within the framework of TIYL (The Indonesia's Young Leaders), and finished in 2008. In October 2011, he started his PhD at the Department of Culture Studies, School of Humanities Tilburg University within the framework of NISIS (the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies) and finished in 2015.

His main academic interests include Qur'anic studies, history (esp. of Indonesian Islam), anthropology of Islam, political Islam, and religion and media. He wrote a number of articles and book chapters, including, among them: 'Salafi dakwah radio: A contest for religious authority' (*Archipel*, forthcoming); 'Radio dakwah in Surakarta: Contest for identity' in Jajat Burhanudin

and Kees van Dijk (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting images and interpretations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), pp. 195-214; 'De betrokkenheid van moslimvrouwen bij online fatwa's: Een Indonesisch voorbeeld', *Al Nisa: Islamitisch maanblad voor vrouwen* 31-11 (2012): 5-11; 'Gerakan religio-kultural MTA dakwah: Mobilisasi dan Tafsir-Tanding', *Afkaruna* 8-2 (2012): 53-169; Radio fatwa: Islamic *tanya-jawab* programmes on radio dakwah, *Al-Jami'ah* 50-2 (2012): 239-278; 'Antara tafsir dan ideology: Telaah awal atas Tafsir Al-Qur'an MTA (Majelis Tafsir Al-Qur'an)', *Refleksi* 12-2 (2011); 'The influences of Meccan education on the *pesantren* tradition with a special teference to Shaykh 'Abd al-Hamid Kudus', *Studia Islamika: Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 15-3 (2008): 467-499; 'Dialog Kesarjanaan Al-Qur'an: Islam dan Barat' *Jurnal NUANSA*, Cairo, Egypt (February 2008): 13-17.

# TILBURG DISSERTATIONS IN CULTURE STUDIES

This list includes the doctoral dissertations that through their authors and/or supervisors are related to the Department of Culture Studies at the Tilburg University School of Humanities. The dissertations cover the broad field of contemporary sociocultural change in domains such as language and communication, performing arts, social and spiritual ritualization, media and politics.

- 1 Sander Bax. *De taak van de schrijver. Het poëtische debat in de Nederlandse literatuur (1968-1985)*. Supervisors: Jaap Goedegebuure and Odile Heynders, 23 May 2007.
- 2 Tamara van Schilt-Mol. *Differential item functioning en itembias in de cito-eindtoets basisonderwijs. Oorzaken van onbedoelde moeilijkheden in toetsopgaven voor leerlingen van Turkse en Marokkaanse afkomst*. Supervisors: Ton Vallen and Henny Uiterwijk, 20 June 2007.
- 3 Mustafa Güleç. *Differences in similarities: A comparative study on Turkish language achievement and proficiency in a Dutch*

- migration context*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur, 25 June 2007.
- 4 Massimiliano Spotti. *Developing identities: Identity construction in multicultural primary classrooms in The Netherlands and Flanders*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon and Guus Extra, 23 November 2007.
  - 5 A. Seza Doğruöz. *Synchronic variation and diachronic change in Dutch Turkish: A corpus based analysis*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Ad Backus, 12 December 2007.
  - 6 Daan van Bel. *Het verklaren van leesgedrag met een impliciete attitudemeting*. Supervisors: Hugo Verdaasdonk, Helma van Lierop and Mia Stokmans, 28 March 2008.
  - 7 Sharda Roelsma-Somer. *De kwaliteit van Hindoescholen*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Sjaak Braster, 17 September 2008.
  - 8 Yonas Mesfun Asfaha. *Literacy acquisition in multilingual Eritrea: A comparative study of reading across languages and scripts*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon and Jeanne Kurvers, 4 November 2009.
  - 9 Dong Jie. *The making of migrant identities in Beijing: Scale, discourse, and diversity*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 4 November 2009.
  - 10 Elma Nap-Kolhoff. *Second language acquisition in early childhood: A longitudinal multiple case study of Turkish-Dutch children*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur, 12 May 2010.
  - 11 Maria Mos. *Complex lexical items*. Supervisors: Antal van den Bosch, Ad Backus and Anne Vermeer, 12 May 2010.
  - 12 António da Graça. *Etnische zelforganisaties in het integratieproces. Een case study in de Kaapverdise gemeenschap in Rotterdam*. Supervisor: Ruben Gowricharn, 8 October 2010.

- 13 Kasper Juffermans. *Local languaging: Literacy products and practices in Gambian society*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 13 October 2010.
- 14 Marja van Knippenberg. *Nederlands in het middelbaar beroepsonderwijs. Een casestudy in de opleiding Helpende Zorg*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Ton Vallen and Jeanne Kurvers, 14 December 2010.
- 15 Coosje van der Pol. *Prentenboeken lezen als literatuur. Een structuralistische benadering van het concept 'literaire competentie' voor kleuters*. Supervisor: Helma van Lierop, 17 December 2010.
- 16 Nadia Eversteijn-Kluijtmans. *"All at once" – Language choice and codeswitching by Turkish-Dutch teenagers*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Ad Backus, 14 January 2011.
- 17 Mohammadi Laghzaoui. *Emergent academic language at home and at school. A longitudinal study of 3- to 6-year-old Moroccan Berber children in the Netherlands*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Ton Vallen, Abderrahman El Aissati and Jeanne Kurvers, 9 September 2011.
- 18 Sinan Çankaya. *Buiten veiliger dan binnen: in- en uitsluiting van etnische minderheden binnen de politieorganisatie*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Frank Bovenkerk, 24 October 2011.
- 19 Femke Nijland. *Mirroring interaction. An exploratory study into student interaction in independent working*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Sanneke Bolhuis, Piet-Hein van de Ven and Olav Severijnen, 20 December 2011.
- 20 Youssef Boutachekourt. *Exploring cultural diversity. Concurrentievoordelen uit multiculturele strategieën*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Slawek Magala, 14 March 2012.
- 21 Jef Van der Aa. *Ethnographic monitoring. Language, narrative and voice in a Carribbean classroom*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 8 June 2012.



- 22 Özel Bağcı. *Acculturation orientations of Turkish immigrants in Germany*. Supervisors: Guus Extra and Kutlay Yağmur, 3 October 2012.
- 23 Arnold Pannenburg. *Big men playing football. Money, politics and foul play in the African game*. Supervisor: Wouter van Beek, 12 October 2012.
- 24 Ico Maly, N-VA. *Analyse van een politieke ideologie*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Sjaak Kroon, 23 October 2012.
- 25 Daniela Stoica. *Dutch and Romanian Muslim women converts: Inward and outward transformations, new knowledge perspectives and community rooted narratives*. Supervisors: Enikő Vincze and Jan Jaap de Ruiter, 30 October 2012.
- 26 Mary Scott. *A chronicle of learning: Voicing the text*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert, Sjaak Kroon and Jef Van der Aa, 27 May 2013.
- 27 Stasja Koot. *Dwelling in tourism. Power and myth amongst bushmen in Southern Africa*. Supervisor: Wouter van Beek, 23 October 2013.
- 28 Miranda Vroon-van Vugt. *Dead man walking in Endor. Narrative mental spaces and conceptual blending in 1 Samuel 28*. Supervisor: Ellen van Wolde, 19 December 2013.
- 29 Sarali Gintsburg. *Formulaicity in Jbala poetry*. Supervisors: Ad Backus, Sjaak Kroon and Jan Jaap de Ruiter, 11 February 2014.
- 30 Pascal Touoyem. *Dynamiques de l'ethnicité en Afrique. Éléments pour une théorie de l'État multinational*. Supervisors: Wouter van Beek and Wim van Binsbergen, 18 February 2014.
- 31 Behrooz Moradi Kakesh. *Het islamitisch fundamentalisme als tegenbeweging. Iran als case study*. Supervisors: Herman Beck and Wouter van Beek, 6 June 2014.
- 32 Elina Westinen. *The discursive construction of authenticity: Resources, scales and polycentricity in Finnish hip hop culture*. Supervisors: Sirpa Leppänen and Jan Blommaert, 15 June 2014.

- 33 Alice Leri. *Who is Turkish American? Investigating contemporary discourses on Turkish Americanness*. Supervisors: Odile Heynders and Piia Varis, 9 September 2014.
- 34 Jaswina Elahi. *Etnische websites, behoeften en netwerken. Over het gebruik van internet door jongeren*. Supervisors: Ruben Gowricharn and Sjaak Kroon, 10 September 2014.
- 35 Bert Danckaert. *Simple present*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert and Odile Heynders, 29 October 2014.
- 36 Fie Velghe. *'This is almost like writing': Mobile phones, learning and literacy in a South African township*. Supervisors: Jan Blommaert, Sjaak Kroon and Piia Varis, 3 December 2014.
- 37 Nico de Vos. *Lichamelijke verbondenheid in beweging. Een filosofisch onderzoek naar intercorporaliteit in de hedendaagse danskunst*. Supervisors: Odile Heynders and Frans van Peperstraten, 16 December 2014.
- 38 Danielle Boon. *Adult literacy education in a multilingual context: Teaching, learning and using written language in Timor-Leste*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon and Jeanne Kurvers, 17 December 2014.
- 39 Liesbeth Hoeven. *Een boek om in te wonen. De verhaalcultuur na Auschwitz*. Supervisors: Erik Borgman and Maaïke de Haardt, 21 January 2015.
- 40 Laurie Faro. *Postponed monuments in the Netherlands: Manifestation, context, and meaning*. Supervisors: Paul Post and Rien van Uden, 28 January 2015.
- 41 Snezana Stupar. *Immigrants regulate emotions in the same way as majority members in the Netherlands*. Supervisors: Fons van de Vijver and Johnny Fontaine, 30 January 2015.
- 42 Jia He. *The general response style from a cross-cultural perspective*. Supervisors: Fons van de Vijver and Alejandra del Carmen Dominguez Espinosa, 4 February 2015.

- 43 Dorina Veldhuis. *Effects of literacy, typology and frequency on children's language segmentation and processing units*. Supervisors: Ad Backus, Jeanne Kurvers and Anne Vermeer, 1 April 2015.
- 44 Harrie Leijten. *From idol to art. African objects-with-power: A challenge for missionaries, anthropologists and museum curators*. Supervisors: Wouter van Beek and Paul Post, 15 April 2015.
- 45 Pelin Onar Valk. *Transformation in Dutch Turkish subordination? Converging evidence of change regarding finiteness and word order in complex clauses*. Supervisors: Ad Backus, Kutlay Yağmur and Massimiliano Spotti, 27 May 2015.
- 46 Paul Mutsaers. *A public anthropology of policing. Law enforcement and migrants in the Netherlands*. Supervisors: Arie de Ruijter and Jan Blommaert, 12 June 2015.
- 47 Geertjan de Vugt. *The polit-dandy. On the emergence of a political paradigm*. Supervisors: Odile Heynders and Sander Bax, 23 June 2015.
- 48 Amit B. Bhansali. *Samkit: Faith-Practice-Liberation*. Supervisors: John Rijsman and Tineke Nugteren, 1 September 2015.
- 49 Clementia Murembe Neema. *Women's empowerment and decision-making at the household level: A case study of Ankore families in Uganda*. Supervisors: Sjaak Kroon, Veerle Draulans and Jef Van der Aa, 6 October 2015.
- 50 Sunarwoto. *Contesting Religious Authority. A Study on Dakwah radio in Surakarta, Indonesia*. Supervisors: Herman Beck and Jan Blommaert, 10 November 2015.